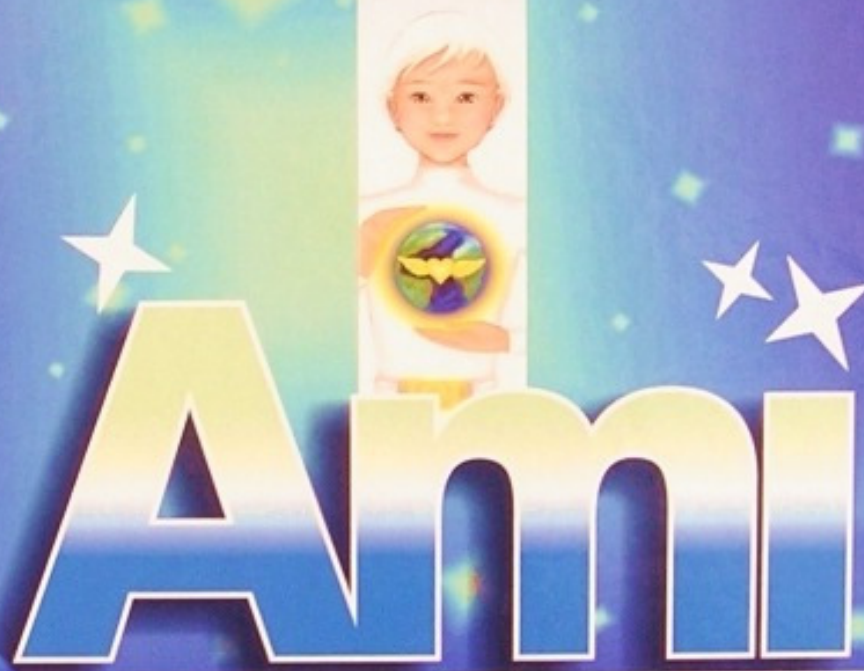


ENRIQUE BARRIOS



Child of the Stars

(From the Stars)



From The Stars

(Ami, Child of the Stars)

By Enrique Barrios
www.ebarrios.com

Literary work reviewed by it's author on 2009

Title: "From the Stars".

Former title: "Ami, Child of the Stars".

Original title in Spanish: "Ami, el Niño de las Estrellas".

Author: Enrique Barrios (www.ebarrios.com)

Translation: Linda Jerome & Enrique Barrios.

Literary Style: Andrew Powell

Publisher: Angelbook.

Copyright © 2009 Enrique Barrios.

All rights reserved ® 2009 Angelbook.

ESBN 74169-060519-173019-63

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review.

This material has been written and published solely for amusement or educational purposes.

The characters and events described herein are provided from memory and imagination. They are intended to be enjoyed and to teach rather than be an exact factual history.

Dedicated to 'children'
of all ages
and of all places
on this round, beautiful 'nation',
the future builders and heirs
of a new Earth
without division between people

Contents

Part One

Chapter 1	First Encounter	p. 6
Chapter 2	Flying Peter	p. 12
Chapter 3	Don't Worry!	p. 21
Chapter 4	The Police!	p. 30
Chapter 5	Kidnapped by Aliens	p. 42
Chapter 6	A Question of Measures	p. 50
Chapter 7	Lights in the Sky	p. 57

Part Two

Chapter 8	Orphir!	p. 68
Chapter 9	The Fundamental Law	p. 76
Chapter 10	Interplanetary Fellowship	p. 86
Chapter 11	Underwater	p. 92
Chapter 12	New Times	p.101
Chapter 13	A Blue Princess	p.107
Chapter 14	Until we meet again, Ami!	p.115

Part One

Chapter 1

First Encounter

It all started one summer afternoon in a small, quiet town on the beach where my grandma and I go on holiday almost every year. We always stay in a little wooden house, with several pine trees and many shrubs in the backyard and a front yard full of flowers. The house was on the outskirts of town, near the ocean, on a path that led towards the beach. My grandma likes to take her vacation at the end of summer when there aren't so many people. She says it's quieter and cheaper then.

It was beginning to get dark. I was alone, standing on some high rocks near the isolated beach, just watching the ocean. Suddenly, I saw a red light in the sky above me. It came down, changing colours and giving off sparks. I thought that it was a giant sparkler or some kind of firework but as it descended and grew larger, I could see it wasn't, for it began to look like a small aeroplane, or something even bigger...

Without making a sound, it fell into the ocean about 150 feet from the beach, right in front of me. In spite of how odd it all was, I thought that I'd witnessed an air disaster and looked up at the sky to see if anyone had parachuted out of the plane. No one had. Nothing disturbed the silence and tranquillity of the beach. I waited a little longer to see if I could make out anything more but I couldn't. Then I thought it must have been a meteorite; whatever it was, there seemed to be a strange sensation in the air.

As I started to leave, something white moved, floating in the ocean at the point where the object had fallen. Someone was swimming towards the rocks, which convinced me that it must have been a plane crash.

I was really nervous. A survivor of the disaster was coming closer and I didn't know what to do. I looked to see if there was anyone else around but there wasn't. I didn't know whether to stay there, or to try to climb down the rocks to the water to help whoever it was. But the rocks were too high, it would take me ages to get down and in the meantime, that person seemed to be perfectly all right because he was swimming so fast and so well.

As he approached, I realised that in spite of his white hair, he was a young boy. He swam to the rocks and before climbing out of the water, he looked at me with a friendly smile. I thought that he must be relieved that he had hadn't drowned. He certainly didn't seem to be upset about the situation and this calmed me down a little. When he had climbed to the top of the rocks in front of me, he shook the water out of his hair and gave me a happy wink, as if we shared a secret. Then I definitely felt better.

After coming over to sit down near me on a protruding rock, he just sighed and started gazing at the stars that were just beginning to appear in the sky, as though nothing special had happened.

He was younger, and shorter, than I was. I thought he was disguised because apart from the colour of his hair, he wore a white suit like one for diving, which fitted close to his body, made of some waterproof material because now it wasn't even wet. It ended in a pair of white boots with thick soles.

I should have realised that it's impossible to swim so well wearing boots like those, but I didn't.

On his chest was a gold-coloured emblem of a heart with wings. It occurred to me that maybe this wasn't a diving suit but the uniform of a sports club for young people interested in aeroplanes. Some instruments that looked like portable radios or mobile phones hung from each side of his belt, which was the same gold colour. In the centre of the belt was a very striking, large, shiny buckle.

It occurred to me that I'd like to have a belt as ornate as that one, but I wasn't sure if I would dare to wear it on the street. It would be great for a fancy dress party, though, or a carnival, or for belonging to a club like his.

We spent a few moments in silence, sitting next to each other. Since he wasn't saying anything, I asked him what had happened.

"Forced landing," he answered, smiling.

He was nice. He had a strange accent and big, friendly eyes. Since he was only a boy, I thought that the pilot must have been a grown-up.

"What about the pilot?" I asked him, looking at the sea.

"Here he is, sitting next to you."

"WOW!" That surprised me. This kid was something! At less than my age, he was already flying aeroplanes! But then I thought to myself that given the accident, he hadn't done so well. As he seemed not to be worried about it, I imagined that his parents must be very rich.

"Somebody else travelling with you?"

"No."

"Thank goodness!"

He smiled and said nothing. Night was falling and I was getting cold. He noticed this because he asked, "Are you cold?"

"Yes, a little."

"The temperature is just right," he told me, smiling. Immediately I felt that I wasn't cold at all, and I didn't have a clue how that had happened.

After a little while, I asked him what he was going to do. "Fulfil the mission," he replied, without taking his eyes off the sky.

I thought that he must be an important kid, not just an ordinary schoolboy on holiday, like me. He had an aeroplane, a uniform and a mission, maybe a secret one...

On the other hand, he was just a kid. Yet I didn't dare ask him about his club or mission; he made me feel something like respect or fear, in spite how small he was. He was different, too, silent. I wondered if he was groggy because of the accident.

"What's going to happen now that the plane is wrecked?"

"What? But it's not wrecked!" he replied merrily, leaving me even more confused.

"Wasn't it lost? Wasn't it completely destroyed?"

"No."

"Is it possible to take it out of the water?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, of course it can be taken out of the water." He was observing me affectionately and added, "What's your name?"

"Peter," I said, but something was beginning to bother me. Besides having his head in the clouds, he didn't answer my questions directly, and he kept changing the subject. He was acting all mysterious, making out he was older than me, and I didn't like that much.

He noticed this was bothering me and obviously thought it funny. "Relax, Peter. Calm down. How old are you?"

"Thirteen... well, almost. What about you?"

He laughed softly. His laugh reminded me of a baby being tickled. I thought he was going to gloat because he could fly a plane and I couldn't, which I didn't like, but actually he was rather nice. I couldn't get really mad at him.

"I'm older than you think," he remarked with a smile.

Reaching for his belt, he pulled off one of the instruments. It was some kind of calculator. He turned it on and glowing symbols appeared that I had never seen before. He made some calculations and, seeing the results, he began to laugh even harder and said, "No, no. If I told you, you wouldn't believe me..."

Night had come and a beautiful full moon appeared, illuminating the ocean and the entire beach. He kept looking the scenery, the sky, the stars and the moon, silently, as if I wasn't there. Then I started thinking how this kid wasn't from around here, that he must be from some distant place, who knows where? At the same time, I was feeling more and more unhappy with this strange kid's silences and riddles. I examined his face carefully. He couldn't be more than eleven years old. Yet he had hinted that he was much older, and also that he was an aeroplane pilot. Could he be a dwarf?

“Some people believe in extraterrestrials,” he remarked almost distractedly.

I thought for a long time before opening my mouth. He was watching me, his eyes full of curiosity and light. The night’s stars seemed to be reflected in his pupils. He looked too joyful to be a normal kid.

I remembered his burning aeroplane falling into the ocean, and how, according to him, it wasn’t wrecked. There was something very strange about that. It was weird, too, how he’d appeared right in front of me. His calculator with the funny symbols was strange as well. So were his accent, his hair and his clothing. Besides, to be honest, *kids just don’t fly aeroplanes*.

“A... are you an extra... terrestrial?” I asked him, and I could feel the hair on the back of my neck standing up.

“If I were, would that scare you?”

Right there and then, I knew for sure that he had come from another world. I was a little frightened, although he seemed to be looking at me with kindness.

“Are you a... baddy?” I asked timidly.

He laughed, amused. “Maybe you’re more of an imp than I am.”

His remark made me feel very surprised. I was a boy who always behaved well, I was a good student, I never got into trouble...

“Why do you say that?”

“Because you’re an Earthling.”

I got the message. He was saying that we Earthlings aren’t much good! This bothered me, but I decided to ignore his comment for the moment and proceed cautiously with this “alien” who seemed to think he was superior to us human beings.

But could it be true that I was talking to someone from another world? I just couldn’t believe it.

“Are you... really an extraterrestrial?”

“Don’t panic!” He comforted me, smiling and joking and pointed to the stars. “This Universe is full of life, millions of worlds are inhabited. There are lots of good people up there.”

His words had a strange effect on me. When he said that, I could almost ‘see’ those millions of worlds inhabited by good people. I wasn’t afraid anymore. I decided not to be surprised by the fact that he was a being from another planet and just to accept it, especially since he seemed friendly and harmless. But all the same, it did bother me that he had offended my species!

“Why do you say that we Earthlings are bad?” I asked.

He kept looking overhead. "How nice the night sky looks from Earth. This atmosphere gives it a brilliance, a colour..."

I started feeling annoyed again. Once again, he wasn't answering my questions; besides, I don't like people thinking that I'm bad when I'm not. Just the opposite, in fact! I had already decided I was going to be a hunter when I grew up, not hunting animals, the poor things, but hunting down bad people, hunters included! I planned to bury them in a big hole and shovel earth on top of them and that way rid the Earth of evil.

"There, in the 'Pleiades', is a civilisation so advanced that... no, you wouldn't believe me"

"We aren't all bad here..."

"Look at that star; we are seeing it as it was a million years ago; now it doesn't exist any more. A civilisation from that region colonised the Zeta Reticulis Cordon and now they live in..."

"Like I said before, we aren't all bad here. Why did you say that we're all bad? Huh?"

"I didn't say that," he answered, still looking at the sky. His eyes were sparkling. "It's a miracle," he remarked.

"Yes, you did say that!" By raising my voice, I was jolly well going to shake him out of his daydream. He was acting just like the teenage girl who lived next door, sitting gawping at her favourite pop star on TV.

He now looked at me attentively but he didn't seem mad at me.

"I meant to say that compared with other worlds, in this one there is not much goodness, nor solidarity."

"You see? You're saying that we're muck."

"That's not what I meant either, Peter." He started laughing again and tried to pat me on the head. I liked that even less. I pulled away. It bothers me when people treat me like I'm just a kid, and a stupid one too. After all, I'm one of the best students in my class. I even won a junior chess tournament and my name appeared in the newspaper, in the section 'Sport in our Schools', in the sub-section 'Chess', in the sub-sub section 'Junior'. Besides, I was almost thirteen years old!

"If this planet is so bad, then what are you doing here?"

"Have you noticed how the moon is reflected in the ocean?" He kept ignoring me and changing the subject.

"Did you come here just to tell me to pay attention to the moon's reflection?"

"Maybe... Have you noticed that we're floating in the Universe?"

When he said that, I finally snapped with annoyance. I forgot any evidence to the contrary and decided this kid must be crazy. Of course! He thought he was an extraterrestrial and that was why he was making such absurd statements. Or else he was a rich brat who happened to be nuts, out to trick everyone with his fantastic stories, with that suit he probably paid a fortune for. Maybe there was no aeroplane at all, maybe he was in the water all the time and from there he had set off some kind of sparkler which had confused me, or some other tomfoolery.

I wanted to go home. I felt stupid because, for a few minutes, I had been taken in by his fantastic stories. Or maybe he'd been pulling my leg just to laugh at me! An extraterrestrial indeed! And I had believed him! I felt ashamed, mad at him and at myself. I felt like giving him a good sock on the nose.

"You think my nose is really ugly?"

That stopped me in my tracks. I felt afraid. Was he reading my mind?

I looked at him. He seemed to be laughing, even jeering, at me, which I didn't take kindly to. I wanted to think it had just been a coincidence between what he said and what I was thinking. But what if it wasn't chance? Maybe he really was a being from another world after all, an 'alien' who could read minds? Or was I standing in front of a madman? I had better try to check it out. A great idea came into my mind!

"Guess what I'm thinking now." I said, and I began to picture a birthday cake.

"So, shall I read your mind?" he asked.

"Forget it. I was just joking."

He found my clumsy evasion rather funny.

"Haven't you had enough proof already?"

I wasn't going to give an inch. If he didn't mention the birthday cake, there was nothing doing!

"Proof? What proof? Proof of what?"

He stretched his legs and supported his elbows on a rock. "Look, Peter, there are other realities, there are other beings from more subtle worlds, with more subtle intelligence and subtle ways of communicating.

"And what on Earth does 'subtle' mean?" I asked him, playing for time.

"How many candles?" he asked, smiling.

I felt as though someone had hit me in the stomach. It made me want to cry. I felt dull and stupid. When I had recovered, I asked him to forgive me for having doubted him. But evidently it hadn't bothered him, for he paid no attention to me and began to laugh.

I decided not to doubt him again!

Chapter 2

Flying Peter

“I must go, it’s getting late”, I said. “Come back with me. My grandma will be happy to meet a boy from another world!”

“Let’s not involve adults in our friendship just now,” he said, smiling and wrinkling his nose.

“But I have to go...”

“Your good and nice grandma is sleeping soundly. She’s not going to miss you if we talk for a while.”

Once again, he surprised me and I found myself admiring him. How did he know my grandma was sleeping? Then I remembered that he was an extraterrestrial being, and that he could read minds... and who knows what else he could do!

“That’s not all, Peter,” he said, sensing what I was thinking. “From my ship I could see that she was just about to fall asleep.” Then he exclaimed enthusiastically, “Let’s take a walk along the beach!” He jumped to his feet, ran to the edge of a very high rock and... jumped off!

I thought he must surely have killed himself. Frantically, I ran over to look down into the abyss. I couldn’t believe my eyes! He was descending slowly, gliding like a seagull, his arms extended in the air. Then I remembered that I shouldn’t be too surprised at anything done by this amazing and joyful boy from the stars, so I carefully got down from the rock as best I could and joined him on the beach.

“How do you do it?”

“By feeling like a bird,” he responded and began to run happily along the surf. I thought that I would like to do it too, but I couldn’t feel how to do it.

“Yes, you can!”

Once more he had read my mind. He came over to encourage me and called out gaily, “Let’s run and jump like birds!”

He took me by the hand; I felt a surge of energy pass into my arm and spread into all of my body. We began running along the beach.

“Now... let’s jump!”

He was able to jump much higher than I could and pulled me up after him. He seemed to hang suspended in the air for a few moments before his feet hit the sand again. We continued running and every now and then, we jumped.

“We’re birds; we’re birds!” he cried, encouraging me and making me feel so good. Little by little, I stopped thinking in my usual way; I could feel I was changing. I wasn’t my everyday self anymore. Encouraged by the boy in white, I was imagining myself as light as a feather, little by little believing in the idea of being a bird.

“Now... up!”

Incredibly, I could tell that we were beginning to stay in the air for a few seconds. Gently we descended and continued running, only to rise up in the air again. Each time we were doing it better. It was really amazing.

“Don’t be surprised, you can do it... Now!”

Each time we tried, it got easier.

In the light of the moon and the stars, we ran and jumped along the edge of the waves like a slow-motion scene in a movie. It felt like another life, another world.

“Just enjoy flying!” he encouraged me. A little later, he let go of my hand.

“You can do it alone! Yes, you can!” he exhorted, as he ran beside me.

“Now!”

Slowly, we leapt up, no longer touching each other, and floating in the air for a few seconds, then beginning to sink down very gently with our arms extended, as if we were gliding.

“It’s marvellous!”

“Bravo! Bravo!” he congratulated me.

I don’t know how long we played that night but for me it was like a wonderful dream.

When I felt tired, I threw myself on the sand, breathing hard and laughing happily. It had been a fabulous, unforgettable experience. I didn’t say anything out loud, but inside my head I was thanking my strange little friend for having enabled me to do things that I had always thought impossible. I didn’t know just how many surprises that spectacular night had in store for me...

The lights of a big beach resort sparkled on the other side of the bay. Delighted, my friend contemplated the shifting reflections on the dark water. He was happy, stretched out in the sand, bathed in bright moonlight. Looking at the full moon, he laughed, “How wonderful! It doesn’t fall! This planet of yours is really fantastic!”

I had never thought about it, but now that he was saying this, yes, I thought it was beautiful to have stars, the ocean, the beach and the lovely moon suspended there, and, what’s more, it wasn’t falling...

“Is your planet beautiful?” I asked.

He sighed deeply while looking at a point in the sky to our right. “Oh, yes, it’s beautiful, too, but all of us know that, and we take good care of it.”

I remembered that he had more or less said we Earthlings are not much good. I now understood why, that we don’t value our planet or preserve it, while they take care of theirs.

“What’s your name?”

He thought my question was funny. “It wouldn’t make sense if I told you.”

“Why? Is it a secret?”

“Honestly! It’s just that the sound of my name doesn’t exist in your language, so you won’t be able to pronounce it.”

“You speak a different language? How did you learn to speak my language then?”

“I don’t speak it or even understand it... unless I have this,” he replied, taking an instrument from his belt. “This is an ‘interpreter.’ It explores your brain at the speed of light and transmits what you think and what you want to say to me; that’s how I can understand you. When I’m going to say something, it ‘translates’ what I want to say and it makes me move my lips and tongue just like you would do, well... almost like you. Nothing is perfect.”

He put away the ‘interpreter’ and began to contemplate the sea, pulling his knees up to his chest as he sat on the sand.

“So that is how you know what I’m thinking. I thought you were doing telepathy.”

“Well, no. But I’m also making progress with practising pure telepathy without the ‘interpreter’.”

“What should I call you, then?”

“Well, I don’t think you’ll be able to pronounce my name: ‘Ami-shimshimahhh’, which in my language means ‘friend’ because that’s what I am, a friend of everyone.”

“Ha, ha!” I laughed out loud when I heard those strange sounds. “You are right, I can’t. But since your name starts with ‘Ami’, I’ll just call you ‘Ami’. It’s shorter and it sounds like a name. Do you like it?”

He looked at me happily and then exclaimed, “That’s a perfect name, Peter!” giving me a hug.

At that moment, I felt that I had formed a new, very special friendship. And so it proved to be...

“What’s the name of your planet?”

“Oh dear! The same problem. There are no equivalent sounds, but it’s up there,” and smiling, he pointed towards the stars.

While Ami was observing the sky, I started thinking about all the space invaders films that I’d seen on television, at the movies and on the Internet. “When are you going to invade us?” I asked him.

He thought my question was funny. “Why do you think that we’re going to invade Earth?”

“I don’t know, but in the movies, the extraterrestrials always try to invade Earth. Are you one of those?”

This time he laughed so merrily that it was infectious and I started laughing, too. I felt ridiculous because of my distrust. Then I tried to justify what I had said.

“It’s just that on TV...”

“Of course, Earthling television! Let’s see one of those space invader films!” he exclaimed, pulling another instrument from his belt buckle. He pressed a button and the screen lit up. It was a small colour television with an amazingly sharp, clear picture. Ami changed channels rapidly.

What was surprising was that even though there weren’t many stations around where we were staying, masses of them now appeared on the screen: movies, live programs, news shows, commercials. The shows were in all different languages spoken by people from all over the world. How could he get so many stations without subscribing to a cable company?

“The films about space invaders are really ridiculous,” said Ami, amused.

“How many channels can you get there?”

“All of them that are transmitting at this moment on your planet.”

“All of them!”

“All of them.”

“In the whole world!

“In the whole world, naturally. This instrument receives the signals picked up by our own... let’s say ‘satellites’, which are invisible to you people, of course. Here’s one from Australia. Look!”

On the screen appeared some creatures with octopus heads and multiple, bulging eyes crisscrossed with little red veins. They fired green rays at a crowd of terrified human beings. My friend seemed to be having a good time watching this film.

“What a laugh! Don’t you think it’s funny, Peter?”

“No. Why?”

“Because these monsters exist only in the monstrous imagination of the people who make these films.”

I thought this over, but I still wasn’t convinced. I had spent my whole life seeing all kinds of scary, evil space invaders on screen and the idea couldn’t be wiped out in one fell swoop.

“But if here on Earth there are iguanas, crocodiles, octopuses, sharks, why couldn’t really evil and ugly creatures exist in other worlds?”

Ami smiled and said, “Please, Peter, take notice that evil is one thing and ugly is another. Not all that you consider ugly is evil, any more than everything you consider beauty is really good. But I can guarantee that up there, there aren’t intelligent beings, whether ugly or beautiful by your standards, the least bit interested in doing harm to your world. Furthermore, those who are able to get here because of their high scientific advancement only want the best for your world.”

I didn’t believe what he said; it was his opinion against hundreds of movies that I had seen before.

“Do you know the whole Universe, Ami?”

“The whole Universe! Of course not!”

“Then maybe there are some worlds you don’t know about, where evil, intelligent beings live.”

Ami was laughing his head off. “Evil, intelligent beings! That’s like saying, ‘bad good people,’ or ‘skinny fat people,’ or ‘ugly pretty people. Those are opposite things, Peter!”

I just couldn’t understand this. What about the crazy, evil scientists who invent weapons of mass destruction, the ones that all the cartoon superheroes on TV fight against?

Ami could read my mind and explained, “They’re not intelligent. They’re crazy. Besides, these are only fantasy, films, cartoons, nothing more.”

“Well, then it’s possible for a world to exist that’s full of crazy scientists who could destroy us...”

“Other than those already on Earth, impossible.”

“Why?”

“Because crazy people destroy their own civilisation before reaching the necessary scientific level to leave their own planet and invade other worlds. And you should definitely make a note of that. Do you want me to repeat it?”

“No.”

“Well then, just never forget that crazy people destroy their own civilisations before reaching the necessary scientific level to leave their own planets and invade other worlds.”

“Okay! Stop there! Don’t keep going on about it!”

“And those who reached the necessary high level only got there because they had already left their madness behind. Consequently, they don’t want to harm anybody, because only mad people want to harm those who no harm do to them. Real intelligence goes along with goodness, or it isn’t real intelligence. So, those who are able to visit Earth are not the Big Bad Wolf you think, Peter.”

Ami seemed to be painting a whole new Universe for me, one coloured pink, and I didn’t completely believe him. I still thought it was possible that some planets could exist that were inhabited by crazy people who weren’t all that crazy; I mean, beings that are intelligent, cold, scientific, efficient, and, at the same time, cruel and evil.

Ami knew, of course, what I was thinking and as usual, was finding it very amusing.

“So now it’s become a matter of ‘crazy-clever’ people... You are really funny, Peter! And where are all those crazy people, so crazy, so intelligent, so cold, so ugly and so evil? How come they’ve never invaded and destroyed any earthly civilisation?” he asked me, putting on an innocent look.

I thought for a while before answering but couldn’t find any examples of extraterrestrial evil in our history.

“Well... I don’t know.”

“Cosmic paranoia!” he said, and started laughing.

I thought he could be right, but how could he be absolutely certain of the “innocence” of all the inhabitants of outer space. There were probably good ones, like Ami, and bad ones, too, just like on Earth.

Ami tried to reassure me. “Believe me, Peter, in the Universe there are ‘filters’, which prevent the undesirables ever entering into higher levels of existence. Otherwise, terrible disasters could occur in the Universe. Don’t you think so?”

“Well... sure.” Some times I didn’t understand him very well.

“Some people say ‘as above, so below’, which would suggest that if there’s evil here, it’s up there too. But ‘up there’ is not entirely the same as down here, just as a respectable neighbourhood is not the same as a city slum full of delinquents. When the civilisations of the Universe reach a certain level of development, there are no more horrors, no more delinquents and people only work for the good. Remember, it’s much easier to develop the technology necessary to build bombs than it is to build intergalactic spaceships. If a civilisation hasn’t developed ‘solidarity’, wisdom or kindness while developing a high level of scientific knowledge, it will end up using that knowledge against itself. That happens long before a civilisation could travel to

other worlds. The Universe doesn't 'commit suicide,' it doesn't permit anything to last very long that goes against the highest purpose of the Universe, life itself."

"But couldn't some bad guys survive in such a planet by chance?"

"By chance? Nothing happens by chance, Peter. The Universe is the reflection of a perfect, superior order. Everything has a well-defined cause and a precise purpose. There are mathematical laws that apply in all domains, even in the evolution of the civilisations of the Universe. But I can assure you, all planetary civilisations that are ignorant of the need for universal solidarity go on to self-destruct if they reach a high technological level and don't overcome this lack of understanding. In other words, when the scientific level of a world exceeds its level of solidarity by too much, that world will destroy itself.

"Level of solidarity?" I could easily understand what a planet's scientific level might be, but the idea of "level of solidarity" was hard for me to grasp.

"This 'solidarity' I'm speaking of, Peter, has its roots in love. We can say that solidarity is made of love, affection and kindness. When human beings share love, affection and kindness, they radiate a certain kind of energy, a very fine energy, the highest, in fact. It can be measured by instruments like those we have."

"Really?"

"Sure, because love is a force, a vibration that penetrates the whole Universe; it is what enables the Universe to exist, as you will soon see. We could say that love is the 'vitamin' that all forms of life need. And the more advanced their evolution is, the more they need it."

"How's that?"

"A dog or a dolphin needs more affection than worms or bacteria."

"Oh, sure."

"And a human being even more."

"It's true!"

As soon as I got the point, I didn't feel as bad as before about my fear of... I almost feel ashamed to confess it... well, this is a secret, shhhh... *of nobody loving me*. But now I understood that needing more affection is not a sign of weakness but about us humans being a long way off from worms and bacteria. Cool!

"That's it, Peter, and from wild beasts too."

"Okay, Ami, thanks for the lesson."

"You're welcome! And whole civilisations too, they need solidarity, the energy of love, affection and kindness just the same. If a world's level of solidarity is low, there is unhappiness, hate, violence, division and war. If, at the same time, there is a high level of the capacity for destruction... do you understand what could happen, Peter?"

“Sure, a big disaster could occur. Is that what you are trying to tell me?”

“I have lots of things to tell you, but let’s go slowly. Let’s continue talking about your doubts.”

I still couldn’t believe that there weren’t any crazy people or invader monsters in the outer space, infinitely big as it is. I told him about a film I’d seen about ‘lizard - extraterrestrials’ that dominated many planets because they were very well organized.

Ami replied, “No civilisation could survive for long without solidarity. To attain the technology that enables one to arrive at other worlds in a matter of minutes, far greater scientific development would be needed than what you have here on this planet. It would take a long, long time to reach that, and to survive for so long you will have to evolve a world of benevolence and affection, with equal opportunity and fairness for all. Otherwise, you will end up destroying your world through the misuse of science and technology. Unfortunately, you are already doing it, in case you don’t realise; it’s happening every day, faster and faster.”

“You are right! We are giving our poor planet a real beating.”

“It’s because of lack of solidarity, Peter. All the ills of this world are due to nothing more than the lack of that ‘vitamin’. There isn’t any organisation without solidarity which can last for very long. So... draw your own conclusions about the future of this planet if everything continues the way it’s going now.”

Later, Ami would explain more of this to me, but for the moment I did still hang on to my doubts about the clever and evil monsters disguised like peaceful beings and nice just on the surface.

“Mr. Paranoia watches too much TV!” Ami exclaimed, and then added, “Try to elevate your thoughts, Peter. When we are thinking of horrendous possibilities, we don’t raise our sights to appreciate the higher reality, where we find goodness, beauty and truth. Those treasures have been always there, waiting for us to find them with our eyes so that they can reveal themselves...”

“Sometimes you talk like a poet, Ami and it’s hard for me to understand you. Do other bad people exist in the Universe, other than those on Earth?”

“Well, in the first place, we don’t divide people into ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ Some are more advanced, some, less, that’s all.”

“All right. Then do beings who have advanced as little as us here exist anywhere else?”

“Of course. And many who are much less advanced, as well. Worlds exist where you couldn’t survive for half an hour. A million years ago, there was a real inferno right here on Earth; well, maybe not for the beings who lived here then, but it would be an inferno for us. And yes, there are worlds inhabited by real monsters.”

“You see? You see?” I exclaimed triumphantly. “I was right! You just admitted it yourself! Those were the monsters I was talking about.”

“But don’t worry. They inhabit worlds much more backwards than this one. Their minds are too primitive to enable them even to discover the wheel. They’ll never arrive here at this rate, not before they cease to be dangerous. Or else they’ll become extinct first, victims of their own medicine.”

That was comforting to hear. “Then, we Earthlings aren’t the worse inhabitants of the Universe, after all.”

“No, but you’re among the most paranoid in the galaxy!”

We laughed like old friends.

Chapter 3

Don't Worry

"Know what? Real close to here, on one of the planets of Sirius there are violet-coloured beaches. They're incredible! If only you could see the twilight of those gigantic suns..."

"Do you travel at the speed of light?"

Ami thought my question comical.

"If I travelled that slowly, I would have been an old man by the time I got here."

"What speed do you travel then?"

"We don't usually 'travel'; it's more a case of 'situating' ourselves."

"What?"

"We 'situate' ourselves by simply appearing at the place we want to go to."

"Instantaneously?"

"Well, we do have to wait a while. The instruments on board have to carry out complex calculations, but from one side of the galaxy to the other would take..." He picked up the calculator hanging on his belt and punched in some numbers. According to your measurements of time... hmmm... an hour and a half. And from one galaxy to another would take a bit more."

"Wow! How do you do it?"

"Time and space streeetch and shooooorten... Things are not what they appear to be..."

"I don't get it. Be more clear, please."

"Can you explain to a baby why it is that two and two make four?"

"No," I replied. "I know they do but I don't really know why either."

"Well, I can't explain things about the space-time contraction and curvature either. And there's no need to. Check out how those little birds glide over the sand. They look as though they're floating. How wonderful!"

Ami was watching a flock of birds running across the beach. They were pecking at something tasty the waves had washed up on the sand. They moved their little legs so

quickly that they seemed to have no legs at all, just floating over the sand. I suddenly realised that it was late.

“I have to go. My grandma...”

“No problem. She’s still asleep.”

“But I’m worried.”

“Worried? How silly!”

“Why?”

“Don’t live your life imagining problems that haven’t yet arisen and aren’t going to. Enjoy the present. You have to take advantage of your life; always choose nice things rather than bad things for your mind. When a real problem arises, that’s the time to figure out how to solve it, instead of worrying when everything is cool, like now.”

“I think you’re right, but...”

“Do you think there would be any point in us standing here worrying that a tidal wave might possibly come along and wash us away? It would be silly not to enjoy this moment, this beautiful night. Look at those birds running along without a worry in the world. Why should we waste this moment thinking about something that doesn’t exist?”

“But my grandma does exist.”

“Yes, she does, and she’s not having any problems. Don’t you think it makes more sense to enjoy this moment?”

“Yes... but I’m worried.”

“You’re incorrigible, Mr. Paranoia. Fine - let’s see your grandma then.”

Ami picked up his television set and began to press the buttons. A picture of the road leading to my house appeared. Images of the trees and rocks along the path passed across the screen. Everything was in colour and all lit up as if it were daytime. The picture on screen passed through the walls of the house and there was my grandma, deeply asleep in her bed. You could even hear her breathing.

That sure was an amazing device!

“She’s sleeping like a little angel,” commented Ami with a laugh.

“Is that some kind of recording?” I asked.

“No. This is ‘live and direct’. Let’s go into the dining room.”

The screen showed the passage leading from the bedroom and the dining room appeared. There was the table and the checked tablecloth, and at the place where I

usually sat, my grandma had left a plate with my dinner, covered by another plate upside down.

“That looks like my UFO!” Ami joked. “Let’s see what you have for dinner.” He adjusted something on the little TV and the plate on top became as transparent as glass. Through it, a piece of steak and some French fries could be seen.

“Yuck!” Ami exclaimed with disgust. “How can you people eat corpses?”

“Corpses?”

“Cow corpses. Dead cows. Are you going to eat a piece of dead cow?”

The way he was talking about it made me feel disgusted, too.

“How does this TV set work? Where’s the camera?” I asked him, very intrigued.

“It doesn’t need a camera. This gadget captures, focuses, selects, filters, encodes, decodes, amplifies and projects. Simple, isn’t it?”

He seemed to be making fun of me.

“How come it looks like daytime when it’s really night?”

“There are other ‘lights’ that your eye can’t see. This apparatus picks them up.”

“How complicated!”

“Not at all. I built this home-made thing myself.”

“Yourself?”

“It’s really out of date but I love it. It’s a souvenir, a homework assignment from primary school.”

“You guys are a bunch of geniuses!”

“Not at all. Do you know how to multiply?”

“Of course,” I replied.

“Then you’re a genius... to someone who doesn’t. It’s all a question of degree. A portable radio or flashlight is a miracle to an aborigine living in the rain forest.”

“You’re right. Do you think that someday here on Earth we’ll be able to have inventions like yours?”

For the first time he looked serious. Gazing at me with what seemed to be sadness, he said, “I don’t know.”

“What do you mean you don’t know? You know everything!”

“Not everything. No one can see the future, luckily.”

“Why did you say ‘luckily’?”

“Just imagine. Life would have no meaning if we could see into the future. Would you want to know the final score of the game you’re watching before it ends?”

“No. That really annoys me. It’s no fun at all,” I replied.

“Do you like to hear a joke that you already know?”

“I hate that, too. That’s boring.”

“Would you like to know what you’re going to get for your birthday ahead of time?”

“That’s worse still. The surprise would be completely spoiled.”

I liked his way of teaching, how he offered clear examples.

“Life would lose all meaning if the future were known ahead of time. You can only figure out the possibilities.”

“How do you mean?”

“For example, you can figure out the possibility, or probability, of the human race saving itself.”

“Saving itself? You mean we are in that much in danger?”

“Think about the pollution, the greenhouse effect, new epidemics, the crazy weather, all the terrorism, the wars, and the bombs.”

“Does it mean that we risk disappearing too, like worlds with bad guys?”

“There is a real possibility. The relationship between science and solidarity on your planet is heavily tilted toward science, forgetting about the heart, the well-being and the happiness of people and all creatures of the world, and of Nature itself.

“Is that very risky?”

“But of course! Many civilisations like yours have vanished for this very reason. You are at a critical point in your evolution. These are delicate moments, dangerous times.”

Ami was scaring me. I had never thought seriously about the possibility of a third World War, or of terrorism as a serious threat to the planet, or there being an environmental catastrophe. I puzzled over it a long time. Suddenly I had a fantastic idea, one that could solve all the world’s problems.

“You guys could do something!” I said, enthusiastically.

“Something like what?”

“I don’t know... arrive in a thousand spaceships and tell all the Presidents not to make war and not to cause pollution. Something like that.”

Ami smiled. “Impossible.”

“Why?”

“We have several good reasons for not interfering with the evolution of this world or any other world.”

“Give me one at least.”

“Alright, one then! If we did something like that, in the first place there would be terror, heart attacks and general paranoia, caused by all those movies about space invaders that portray us as horrendous and evil toads. We don’t have hearts made of stone, you know - we couldn’t bring about something like that.

“Pooh! I don’t think it would be that serious. People are already prepared. I think that if you landed in the park of any city and you came with a message of peace...

“Well, I must admit that due to our efforts so far, it wouldn’t be as serious as before. But anyhow, we couldn’t do it because there are still millions of people who would panic. Besides, in that friendly declaration we would have to tell you that there is no place for weapons, which should be transformed into work tools. People would think that it was an extraterrestrial disarmament plan, a trick so that we could dominate the planet.

“I guess... you are right.”

“But let’s suppose that they were able to understand that we intend no harm; they still wouldn’t give up their weapons.”

“Why not?”

“Because they would be afraid of what other countries might do. Who’s going to be the first to disarm?”

“But they have to trust...”

“Those who lead the nations of this world aren’t very trustful of other leaders - and they’re right because some of them are neither friendly or honest, and do indeed desire to dominate everything that they can. So, if we did bring about the disarmament of a nation, we could be blundering badly, leaving it at the mercy of not very friendly neighbours. We had better avoid getting into that, don’t you agree?”

I was feeling really uneasy. I kept trying to think of a solution to prevent war and save humanity. After I’d thought about it for a long time, the only thing that occurred to me was that the extraterrestrials could take power on Earth by force, destroy our weapons and the factories that pollute the environment and oblige us to live in peace. I told Ami this.

When he had stopped laughing, he pointed out that I was thinking like an earthling, and that I still wanted to bury alive all the evil people of the world, as in my childish daydream.

‘Force. Destroy. Oblige.’ To us, that’s prehistoric thinking. Human liberty is something sacred, both one’s own and that of others. Each person is valuable and his or her will is to be respected. Acting any other way would be doing violence, a word that comes from ‘violate,’ which is something completely opposed to our nature.

“Then your people don’t make war?” I hadn’t even finished saying this before I felt stupid for asking.

He looked at me affectionately and putting his hand on my shoulder said, “We can’t make war, Peter.”

“No? Why?”

“Because we love.”

“I don’t get it. You love whom?”

“We love it all; people, nature, animals, life, everything. Those who love can’t harm what they love. So forget about invasions or wars and the like. We are not here to destroy anything, nor to harm anybody but to build and help.”

Ami’s answer really surprised me. These people were incredibly good! He started laughing when he perceived what I was thinking.

“We are not good but normal. Those who are not that normal are the ones around here.”

“Why us?”

“Because you’re a little bit crazy, of course. You don’t live according to natural laws, which are a reflection of the Will of the Universe. Have you seen any other species, apart from the human, making war on its own kind?”

After thinking it over for a while, I said not.

“You see? That would be madness, like destroying Nature, which no other species does either. But you think it’s normal because you don’t live according to universal or natural laws. Some people are so crazy that they don’t even believe that an intelligence and a precise purpose lies behind the Universe.”

I knew Ami was talking about God, and I believed in God... well, a little, though mostly out of fear rather than for any other reason. However, lately I was beginning to have my own doubts about even that. It seemed to me that only religious types believed in God, or people who aren’t very educated; anyhow I have an uncle who is a nuclear physicist in the university and he says that intelligence killed God.

“Your uncle is foolish,” remarked Ami, smiling and perceiving my thoughts.

“I don’t think so. He’s considered one of the most intelligent men in the country.”

“He’s foolish,” Ami insisted. “Can an apple kill the apple tree? Can a wave hurt the ocean?”

I started thinking about God, a little ashamed that I had doubted his existence.

“Listen! Take away the white beard and robes!” Ami was laughing because he had seen my mental images.

“Then... He doesn’t have a beard? God shaves?”

My space friend was delighted by my confusion. “That’s an Earth-style god,” he commented.

“Why?”

“Because of his earthly appearance.”

What was Ami trying to tell me? That God hasn’t a human appearance but looks like some kind of extraterrestrial?

He knew what I was thinking and, laughing, he took a twig and drew a human figure on the sand.

“In worlds like yours or mine, and in other similar ones, the basic model is the same, with us having head, trunk and limbs, yet there are little differences of height, colour of skin, shape of the ears and so. Those differences are present here, among the different human types of this world.”

“It’s true, but you look like a normal boy from Earth. How is that possible?”

“I look like an Earthling because the people of my planet closely resemble human boys. For that very reason, I can be on this mission here without scaring anyone by my appearance. However, I’m not a boy and that’s why my hair is white. But the inhabitants of other worlds have different shapes, according to the characteristics of their planets. For instance, in worlds where there’s only water, what use would legs have? There, the people are shaped like fish, because that’s what’s most convenient and practical.”

“Like mermaids!”

“Something like that. But God, as you would say, doesn’t have the face or the shape of a man from your world or mine, nor of any other world in the Universe.

“No? Then he has the face of a... what?”

“Come on, let’s go for a walk and I’ll explain it to you.”

We began walking on the path that led to town. Ami put his arm across my shoulder; at that moment, I felt that he was the brother I never had.

Some nocturnal birds squawked in the distance and Ami seemed delighted by the sounds. He breathed in the sea air.

“What you call God doesn’t have a human appearance, or any form at all. There is only an Infinite Being that penetrates all, made of pure creative intelligence, pure love. And that’s why the Universe is so marvellous”. Ami’s face was shining in the night as he talked, which moved me, in spite of my not being the religious kind.

But when I thought about the inhabitants of the primitive worlds that Ami had mentioned and also about the bad people on this planet, those who deserve to be thrown into a deep pond, it didn’t seem to me that the Universe was such a marvellous a place after all.

“What about the bad people?”

“They’ll be good people some day.”

“It would have been better if they have been born good from the very start. That way there’d be no evil anywhere.”

“If you don’t know evil, how are you going to be able to enjoy goodness? How would you be able to appreciate it?” asked Ami.

“I don’t understand what you mean.”

“Don’t you think it’s beautiful that you’re able to see?”

“I don’t know. I never thought about it... I guess so.”

“If you had been born blind and suddenly you could see, then your sense of sight would seem marvellous to you.”

“Oh, yes!”

“It’s the same with those who have lived difficult, violent existences. When they overcome their difficulties and attain a life that’s peaceful and harmonious, they truly appreciate it, since what is difficult to achieve is valued more than what comes without having to try. It’s beautiful to be able to make progress, to overcome obstacles, to learn to solve our problems and to grow up in every way. If, on the other hand, we were born without problems, we couldn’t properly appreciate what we have.”

We were walking in the moonlight along the path, bordered by trees, plants and foliage. We passed my house.

“Wait for me here a minute.” I quietly went indoors to look for a sweater. On the dining room table, I saw my plate, covered up and waiting for me. I felt rather proud because even without removing the plate on top I already knew what was under it. Then, I started to have doubts, so I took a peek to make sure. Yes, it looked exactly as it had on my friend’s little TV set; but I still wasn’t hungry.

I rejoined Ami and we continued walking and talking. We still hadn't reached the town and I couldn't yet see any street lights. Ami was contemplating everything while he talked.

"Do you know what you're doing?" he asked me unexpectedly.

"No, what?"

"You're walking. You can walk."

"Oh, yes. Of course. And what's so surprising about that?"

"Nothing for you, but think about people who have been injured and who only after months, or even years of rehabilitation, are able to walk again. For them the ability to walk is really extraordinary, and they're thankful for it - they enjoy it! You, on the other hand, walk around all the time without paying it the least bit of attention, without thinking that you're doing anything special..."

"You're right, Ami. You're telling me so many new things. Thanks."

"You are welcome, sir! That's what we are here for." he said merrily, giving me a wink.

Chapter 4

The Police!

We came to the first street that was lit. It must have been about eleven at night. For me just walking around town so late was an adventure, but I felt protected by Ami.

While we were strolling around, Ami paused to look at the moon through the leaves on the trees. Every so often, he told me that we should listen to the croaking of the frogs, the chirping of the night crickets and the distant murmur of the waves. He stopped to breathe in the aroma of the pines, the tree bark and soil. He frequently paused to admire a house that appealed to him, or a road, or a street corner.

“Look how pretty those street lights are, pretty enough to paint. Notice how the light falls on that vine. And those roofs outlined against the moon... Life is here for us to enjoy, Peter. Try to pay attention to all that life brings you. There is magic in every moment, but we hardly notice all these simple things. Try to feel, to perceive, instead of thinking. The most profound meaning of life lies beyond thought. You know what, Peter? Life is a fairy tale come true. It’s a beautiful gift that was given to you because... you are loved”

His energy and his words helped me see everything from a new point of view. It seemed incredible to me that this was the normal, everyday world that I’d never paid much attention to. Now I was seeing it all as miracle, that all this time I was living in a kind of paradise and that I never noticed it before. Instead, I had been ‘sleeping’, absorbed in my own thoughts and not paying attention to anything else.

We arrived at the town square. Some teenagers were standing at the door of a disco; others were talking in the middle of the square. The place was very quiet, especially now the summer season was coming to an end. No one paid us any attention, despite Ami’s suit and his white hair. Maybe they just assumed that it was some kind of kid’s outfit.

I imagined what would happen if people knew what kind of ‘kid’ was in town; reporters from the newspapers and the TV news would show up and surround us.

“No, thanks!” said Ami, reading my mind. “I don’t want to become a martyr.”

I didn’t understand what he meant.

“First thing, they’d take me prisoner for having entered the country ‘illegally.’ Then they’d accuse me of being a spy and torture me to obtain information about our ‘invasion plans’ and, most of all, our scientific achievements, so they could try converting them into weapons. Then, after having squeezed me dry like a lemon, the doctors would want to take a look inside my beautiful little body. No, thanks!”

Ami was laughing as he described this horrible scene. Yet I recognised there was truth in what he said and I felt uneasy on his behalf, all the more so when he wanted to chat

to the boys in the square. I stopped him and we sat down on a park bench at a distance from the teenagers.

“Mr. Paranoia is eternally worried” he said, laughing. I didn’t pay him any attention but started thinking how if the extraterrestrials revealed themselves little by little, so that everyone got used to them, one day they could come out in the open.

“We’re doing something like that; we do give out hints and signs, sometimes a great many, including sightings of UFOs, but only according to a certain plan. I’ll explain it all to you soon. However, as to showing ourselves openly, I’ve explained why it’s not advisable, indeed the laws forbid it.”

“What laws?”

“The universal laws. In the evolved worlds, there are general rules that everyone must respect. One of these is not to interfere with non-evolved worlds.”

“Non-evolved worlds?”

“That’s what we call worlds that don’t have a stable planetary civilisation, and they don’t have it because they don’t live in accordance with the fundamental law of the Universe.”

“What does all that mean?”

“Worlds whose inhabitants live in accord with that law have a single government, there are no longer any frontiers and everything is shared in brotherhood, peace and harmony. That’s what it means to live in accord with the fundamental law of the Universe. That’s what an evolved world is like.”

“I don’t understand. What is this foundation law... of what?”

“You see? You’ve never heard of it!” Ami was making fun of me. “You’re not evolved!”

“But I’m just a kid. Surely the adults must have heard of it, the scientists, the presidents of countries...”

Ami laughed loudly. “Adults? Scientists? Presidents? Not likely!”

“Even the leaders of countries have never heard of it?”

“Well, that’s the way it goes in your world. That’s why there isn’t as much happiness as there should be.”

“But what’s this law?”

“I’ll tell you about it later.”

“Really?” I got quite excited, thinking that I would soon know something that almost no one else did.

“If you behave yourself,” Ami joked.

I started thinking hard about this rule against intervening in non-evolved planets and I realised that something didn’t fit.

“Then you’re violating this rule!” I exclaimed with surprise.

“Bravo! You didn’t miss that detail.”

“Of course not. First you said that intervening is forbidden. Yet here you are talking to me. This is intervening... or isn’t it?”

“What I’m doing is not intervening in the evolution of humankind on Earth. Showing ourselves openly and communicating with everyone, as you suggested, that would be intervening. And do you know why it’s forbidden to intervene?”

“I’ve no idea.”

“If we did, apart from the disasters I already told you about, the most frightening catastrophes in the history of this world could take place”

He was scaring me. “What catastrophes, Ami?”

“If the people of Earth heard about the economic, scientific, social and spiritual systems that we use, they would want to imitate us. Everyone would want to follow our example and they would all lose respect for their leaders, for all their own traditions and beliefs, and for the institutions that make up human society. Then the world’s power structures could collapse, endangering your whole civilisation’s stability. Some powerful people would get mad when they saw that they were losing their status - it would be complete chaos, possibly the end of everything that your people have achieved up to the present time.”

“But then, you who are such good guys could step in to prevent such a disaster and make sure everything in our world gets fixed,” I said, half-joking.

“That would be a trap, like one student taking another student’s exams for him. Would you like another student to sit your exams for you and take the credit?”

“No, because I’d miss the satisfaction of succeeding myself.”

“And if we arranged everything here, then the entire population of Earth would miss out on the satisfaction of overcoming their problems through their own effort and so reaching a superior level of civilisation. Don’t you think that’s so?”

“You’re right. I hadn’t thought about that.”

“For many reasons, we can’t intervene any further than what’s permitted. My contact with you here is part of an ‘aid plan.’”

“Please explain that more.”

“This ‘aid plan’ is like a ‘medicine’ that we have to give in small doses, slowly, subtly, very subtly...”

“But what’s the medicine?”

“Information.”

“Information? What information?”

“Well, we’ve been around here since ancient times, but it was only after the first atomic bomb that we began giving you signs of our existence.

“You mean UFOs?”

“Right That was done, and is still being done, to give you some evidence of the existence of other intelligent beings in the Universe, and to give you a clue that we are aware of your recent warlike discoveries. Anyone with half a mind could deduce that we are not aggressive, and more than that, if we, who are more advanced than you, are not violent, you shouldn’t be violent either.”

“Why do you choose to put such a burden on your shoulders?” I asked.

Ami looked at me with affection and said, “it’s not a burden but a pleasure, because solidarity is something natural and universal. The more evolution, the more solidarity! We can’t stop ourselves helping those who are in need, because we see them and us as all being part of the same thing. Does it give you pleasure when you think about the suffering and hunger of so many helpless people in the poor countries of this world?”

“Of course not.”

“One could say that since they live in other countries, it isn’t your problem...”

“Well, I get affected just the same, even though they might look different from me and speak a foreign language. Poor people...”

“You see? Solidarity is something natural, it happens of its own accord. Many people are upset about what is happening in those places and they try to help. Some go out to those poor countries to assist in any way they can. Why? Out of solidarity! We have come here motivated by that same force of solidarity, it’s that simple. Among other things, we wish you to understand that handling great power, like nuclear energy - and there is another even more powerful energy- can be very dangerous and requires great delicacy and care; it must never be used for the purposes of destruction, especially against your own species. And it’s not only about you, because in the wrong hands, that most powerful energy could even affect other worlds, harming cosmic alignment, with consequences at the galactic level...”

“WOW!”

“Yes sir, though not right now. But science is advancing so we must be mindful of this risk. Don’t you think that makes sense?”

“Yes, totally. I’m understanding much better now.”

“Besides all that, we establish occasional contact with some persons, like you, and we also send telepathic messages. Those messages pass through the air like radio waves. They reach everybody, but some people are not so sensitive, while others have ‘receivers’ able to catch them. Everything we do is for the purpose of giving you information or assistance.”

“Amazing! And we don’t even notice. I think you should reveal more about yourselves; at least a bit more, as much as you can.”

“At present we can’t show ourselves too much, Peter.”

“Why not?”

“Because the Universe has already given you enough information about how to transform the human world, and the planet too, through an increase in solidarity. That’s the only thing you need for your world to change positively and to end the dangers that threaten you.”

“I haven’t been aware of this information that you’re telling me about.”

“Because you never got interested in the subject. Yet millions of pages have been written, many books and some films too, inspired by us. That is why it’s now time to practice what you already know, to solve these personal and social problems of yours that have grown so big; better than expecting ETs to come and do it for you. We ETs don’t want to become an avoidance drug...”

“Avoidance drug?”

“Yes, the whole subject of ETs can be used as a fantasy to escape from reality. We don’t want to be used like this but for it to work the other way round, by encouraging you to face your problems and overcome them.”

“I understand. That makes sense.”

“At the same time, we must limit the sightings of ETs to the minimum possible because we don’t want certain governments to become paranoid and invest huge amounts of money in research, nor do we want to give them the justification for more armaments, while millions of people are starving and there are so many problems solve.”

“I really understand that. So that’s why you don’t show up as much as I was thinking you should. Thank you so much for your concern for all the poor people, Ami.”

“Our duty is our pleasure. As to how much we show ourselves, I hope you’ll come to understand that nothing happens by chance, and that everything that hovers over your world, seen and unseen, all conforms to one great ‘aid plan’.”

“Do you mean that there aren’t ‘independent spaceships’ in search of uranium or things like that?”

“There is scientific research going on, of course, but not ‘independently’. Nothing in our worlds is for other than the highest good according to the plan I mentioned”.

“When will you be able to appear openly in front of people?”

“Only when your people have learned to live in a civilised manner will that big encounter will take place. It can’t be before then. Our respect for the freedom of all peoples is based in universal solidarity.”.

“But surely you could do something so we could get faster to that great encounter?”

“Evolution is something very delicate, Peter. It’s similar to the education of a child; you can’t push beyond certain limits. What we do we must do with great care. That is why we can only ‘suggest’ things very subtly through ‘special’ persons like you.”

“Like me? What’s so special about me?”

“Maybe I’ll tell you later. For the moment, you only need to know that you have a certain ‘characteristic’. I have to go soon, Peter. Would you like to see me again?”

“Of course. That would be fantastic. You’re a nice pal.”

“And you are a great guy. But if you want me to return, you’ll have to write a book about everything that you’ve experienced with me. That’s why I’ve come here. It’s also part of the ‘aid plan’.”

“Me? Write a book? But I don’t know how to write books!” I protested. Ami ignored me.

“Write it as if it were a just a story, a fantasy adventure, otherwise everyone will think you’re mad, or a liar. Also, the book must appeal to young people, because besides being the future of the humanity, they are more willing to take on board the need for a new planetary consciousness. That’s what is going to make possible the existence of a better world, and young people need steering in the right direction, don’t you think?” he said, giving me a wink.

I thought Ami was right, but writing a book by myself sounded like an impossible task. Ami was aware of this though, and before I could say anything, he had a suggestion.

“Ask that cousin of yours who likes to write, the one who works at the bank, to help you. You can tell the story and he can write it down. He’ll find the right style and vocabulary.”

Ami seemed to know more about me than I did myself!

“This book will also be part of the information I was telling you about. But more than this we’re not allowed to do. And now I’ll tell you something very interesting. Aren’t you glad that there is not the slightest possibility that an advanced but evil civilisation could, as you feared, invade the Earth?”

“Yes, of course.”

“This is because we have never helped any violent people to develop.”

I saw what Ami was driving at.

“If you folks on Earth didn’t overcome your differences but carried on with your blind materialism and violence, and yet we still went on helping you, you would simply use your new scientific knowledge to try to exploit and conquer other civilisations in space.”

“You are right. I guess we would end up taking our ‘delightful’ habits everywhere we went.”

“Besides which, as I mentioned, there’s another type of very powerful energy you don’t know about. Atomic energy compared with this energy would be like a match compared with the Sun.”

“Wow!”

“Yes sir, I was talking about that when I mentioned consequences at a galactic level. That’s why we can’t run the risk of a non-evolved world like yours coming into possession of this energy and endangering the peace of our evolved worlds, or even starting a cosmic catastrophe.”

“I’m getting anxious, Ami.”

“Because of the danger of cosmic catastrophe, Peter?”

“No, because I think it’s too late.”

“Too late to save humanity?”

“No, for me to go to bed.”

Ami was laughing his head off. “Chill out, Peter. We’ll have a look at your grandma.”

He took the small television from his belt buckle and Grandma appeared on the screen, sleeping with her mouth open. “She’s having a great time,” he joked.

“I’m tired. I want to go to sleep, too.”

“Fine, let’s go” he said.

We were walking back to my house when a police car drove by. Seeing two boys alone at that time of night, the policemen stopped the car, got out and came over to us. I was really afraid that they would arrest my new friend, take him to jail and submit him to the torture he spoke about earlier.

“What are you two doing around here so late?” one of them said, pointing a flashlight at our faces.

“Walking around and enjoying life” Ami answered very calmly. “What about you guys? Are you working? Hunting down criminals?” and, as usual, he laughed.

When I saw how Ami was acting in front of the police, I was even more fearful than before. But they thought my friend was funny and laughed too. I tried joining in but I was so nervous I couldn’t.

“Where’d you find that outfit?”

“On my planet,” Ami nonchalantly replied, revealing himself, which scared me to death.

“Oh, then you must be a Martian.”

“Not a Martian, but I am an extraterrestrial.”

Ami had answered merrily as if he didn’t have a care in the world, while my terror increased.

“So where’s your UFO?” asked one of the policemen, observing Ami with some amusement. The policemen thought Ami was just playing a kids’ game but, of course, he was simply telling the truth.

“I parked it down at the beach, underwater, didn’t I, Peter?”

Now Ami was getting me mixed up in this mess! I didn’t know what to do. I tried to smile and could only grimace. I didn’t dare tell the truth because of my fear that he could end up in jail.

“Don’t you have a ray gun?” The men in uniform were enjoying the conversation. So was Ami, but I was feeling more and more desperate.

“I don’t need one. We don’t attack anyone. We’re good guys.”

“What if a bad guy came at you with a gun like this?” The policeman showed him the gun, while pretending to be threatening.

“If someone tried to attack me, I’d paralyse him with my mental force.”

“That’s interesting! Let’s see it! Paralyse us.”

“Sure. You asked for it. The effect on you will last for ten minutes.”

The three of them laughed loudly. Suddenly Ami went very quiet and looked at them intently. In a strange, deep, authoritarian voice he ordered, “You will remain immobile for ten minutes. You cannot, you cannot move... starting NOW!” He flicked his fingers and... there the cops remained, frozen with smiles on their faces, right where they’d been standing.

“See, Peter? In worlds that aren’t very evolved, all you need to do is tell the truth as if it were a game or a fantasy,” he explained to me as he touched the nose of one policeman and then gently pulled the moustache of the other. Both of them stood

motionless like statues. The smiles on their faces were beginning to look tragic. Everything Ami was doing made me even more afraid.

“Let’s run away! Let’s get away from here! They might wake up,” I exclaimed, trying not to talk too loudly.

“Don’t worry, stay calm. We still have plenty of time before the ten minutes are up,” Ami said. To have a bit more fun, he turned round their caps, so the peaks were at the back. My only desire was to get away from this place, and from this crazy, irresponsible extraterrestrial.

“Let’s go! Let’s get out of here, Ami!”

“Mr. Paranoia is worrying again, instead of enjoying the moment” he said, taking the bullets out of their guns and throwing them away. “Fine, let’s go.”

Reluctantly, he went up to the smiling policemen and with the same voice he had used before, he instructed “When you wake up, you will have entirely forgotten about the two boys.”

We reached the first corner and turned towards the beach, leaving the policemen far behind.

I felt much better. “How did you do that?”

“Hypnosis.”

“Hypnosis! Cool!”

“It’s nothing, anyone can do it.”

“I don’t think so. I’ve heard that not everyone can be hypnotised. It could have been the case with one of them.”

“Everybody can be hypnotised,” said Ami. “And what’s more, almost everybody is already hypnotised.”

“What do you mean? I’m not hypnotised! I’m awake!”

Ami laughed a lot at this. “Do you remember when we were walking down the path?”

“Yes, I remember.”

“Everything looked different to you – beautiful – and you remarked that you must have been asleep for not having noticed that before, right?”

“Oh, yes. It seems like I was hypnotised then. Maybe you hypnotised me!”

“On the contrary, you were awake on that path! Now you’re asleep again, imagining that everything is ugly and dangerous. You’re not listening to the ocean, you’re not paying attention to the sweetness of the night air, you’re not aware of your ability to

walk or see, you're not enjoying your breathing. You're hypnotised and what's more, you're hypnotised negatively!"

"Negatively?"

"There are many ugly ideas that don't have a basis in reality. They're just dreams, fantasies, unjustified fears. They're delirium, craziness, and because they aren't good ideas, they're not even craziness that's fun. They're nightmares."

"Like what ideas, Ami?"

"Like what goes through the heads of so many people in this world a million times a day, like your worries about the policemen and your space monsters."

Ami laughed, which made me laugh too. Then he stopped, looked toward the ocean and said, "and like people who believe in war, who believe that killing other human beings can be justified, that it's something 'glorious'. They even tell themselves that 'God' orders them to kill! Or, that by killing or torturing civilians, children, women and old people, 'God' will be pleased with them, so pleased that they will go straight to heaven! That's hypnosis, Peter, and it's hypnosis of the nightmare variety; utter madness and in total contradiction of human and universal solidarity, and of the power of love."

"You're totally right, Ami."

"And there's a more common kind of nightmare, Peter. Enormous numbers of people live frightened by life itself, frightened that they're going to lose their health, their job, their mate, their lives; others are convinced that the world, and outer space too, is populated by enemies and they go through life armed with heavy-duty locks on their doors, guard dogs and massive insurance policies. Others live in fear of ghosts, the devil or extraterrestrials, or are convinced that the Earth is going to collide with another planet, and many other such things. All of that is hypnosis, Peter. Almost everybody here is hypnotised one way or another, in a daydream or a nightmare of some kind, and fear is the background music."

"Don't they ever wake up?"

"Yes, every time someone is able to see that their inner darkness, their lack of internal harmony, stops them from enjoying the beauty of reality. Then comes the realisation that the only way forward is to begin the journey of personal growth, overcoming imperfections and harmonising with the flow of universal life and the law of solidarity. That's what leads to the awakening. An awakened person feels that life is beautiful, and even though there may be difficult times, it is always an extraordinary opportunity to love, to enjoy, to grow up and to help others."

Then I remembered something really sad - when I found myself all alone in the world, after I had lost my parents. Luckily I was a baby at the time and so I don't actually remember them. My grandma took care of me and has always loved me; but I would have still preferred to be a normal boy with a normal family. Well, there was nothing to be done about it...

Ami continued, explaining, “a person on the path of personal growth also values the problems and challenges of his or her life, knowing that all these difficulties are tests that help a person grow in understanding, that they are necessary steps to awakening.”

When he said that, I felt a click of understanding inside me.

“Such a person remembers that the bitter moments are few compared with the good times and that is why he or she can still enjoy life, despite all the ups and downs.”

I can’t say I was much like that, nor had I seen anyone else capable of it, unless they were posing for a photo or acting in a movie. Ami knew what I was thinking.

“Don’t you judge others by appearance. You never know what’s going on inside them, nor is that your business. Just concentrate on how you can improve yourself, instead of looking to other people to see what they do or how they seem to be. You should relish the opportunities your own life brings you, because life is beautiful and it is short. To think that people even interrupt their evolutionary process by killing themselves because of some little problem... Do you see how tragic that is? They kill themselves, Peter, instead of making the effort to understand the lesson that every problem brings, and finding out how to solve it.”

Ami was getting hard to understand, and I was still frightened when I thought about our encounter with the police moments before. “Why didn’t your jokes bother those policemen?”

“Because I appealed to their good side, to their childlike side.”

“But they’re the police!”

He looked at me as if I had just said something really silly. “Everyone has that childlike side, never mind their nightmares, Peter.” Laughing, he added, “almost no one is so far gone that he can’t set aside his worries for a second. If you want, let’s go to a jail and look for the worst criminal...”

“No thanks!”

“The majority of the people on this planet are asleep, that’s for sure. But in spite of it they are more good than bad.”

“Really?”

“Of course, there is more love than hate in their hearts.”

“It doesn’t seem that way...”

“Even bad people believe they are right in what they think or do. One can’t live thinking one is wrong. Some people really do terrible things but it’s still because of faulty thinking, bad dreams, hypnosis. If you can show them their good side, in general they will repay good with good. But if you see only their bad side, they’ll repay evil with evil.”

“Then, if people are not so bad, why is there more unhappiness in this world than happiness?”

“Because your way of thinking, and of how you live together, is still the same as it was in the early history of the human race, when there were huge distances between people, when you knew nothing about other countries and so there was ignorance, distrust and dispute among all people of the Earth. Everyone lived terrified of each other, locked inside their walls and castles, thinking only of war, and of conquering or defending. In those times, the saying was ‘What is unknown or different is sure to be a danger’ and many times it really was! But now the situation has progressed enormously, human beings can know each other better, there is global communication and initiatives can be taken for the common good, since people realise that to be united and in peace is good for everyone.

“It’s true, Ami.”

“Unfortunately, the old way of thinking, ‘what is unknown or different is sure to be a danger’ still underpins many laws, customs, social and economic systems, so there is competition, division, egoism, superficiality, dishonesty and distrust widespread among people, organisations and nations. If we can evolve our thinking to suit the new global conditions of today, life will be better and people will be happier.”

“What new ways of thinking should we adopt?”

“For instance, to make a friend of what is unknown and different instead of feeling threatened. Otherwise, it could turn out you just lost the chance of making your best friend in the world”.

I understood that Ami was suggesting an enormous and difficult change of attitude, but that he was right anyway.

“Think what would happen if we took a positive attitude, one that was unselfish, honest and affectionate towards others, towards everything, known or unknown, familiar or strange. Think about a society without a knee-jerk attitude of distrust, rejection, challenge or coldness. Think how the world could be transformed, how laws, customs, social and economical systems would change for the positive, how people would be more happy and how this could produce a fantastic change for the future of humanity.”

Actually, at that point I didn’t get much of what Ami was saying, but later, after his departure, I remembered it and found I could understand it, and then I was able to guide my cousin to write it down more or less the way Ami said it.

Chapter 5

Kidnapped by Aliens!

“We’re back at your house” said Ami. Will you be going to sleep now?”

“Yes. I’m really exhausted. I can hardly keep my eyes open. What about you? What are you going to do?”

“I’m going back to the spaceship. I’ll take a spin around the stars.”

“Wow. Cool!” I exclaimed.

“I wanted to invite you, but since you’re so tired...”

Faced with the extraordinary possibility of taking a ride in a ‘flying saucer,’ I suddenly found I wasn’t at all tired. I felt rested and full of energy.

“Not any more! Seriously, would you take me for a ride in your UFO?”

“Of course. But what about your grandma?”

I immediately thought of a way that I could go out without being missed. “I’ll eat dinner and leave the empty plate on the table. Then I’ll put my pillow under the blankets so that if my grandma gets up, she’ll think I’m in bed asleep. I’ll take off these clothes I’m wearing, leave them there, and put on others. I’ll do it all carefully and quietly.”

“A little white lie,” Ami agreed, “because it’s essential that you come with me so that you can write that book. Thousands of people will thank you for it.”

“Thousands?”

“Thousands, Peter. That’s why it’s so important for you to come with me. We’ll be back before your grandma wakes up. Have no fear. I’m coming with you inside your house. Let’s go silently, shhhhh.”

Once I was inside the house, everything went exactly according to plan, but when I tried put the plate inside the microwave to warm up my dinner, Ami stopped me, and with his finger on his lips signalled that my grandma might be woken by the noise it made. Then he took out one of his gadgets, put it over the plate and the meal warmed up instantly without any noise. But when I tried to eat the meat, the word “cadaver” kept ringing in my ears and made me feel sick. I chewed a piece and I discovered it tasted horrid, like an old shoe. I couldn’t eat it, only the potatoes and a salad that I took out of the refrigerator, so I prepared a glass of milk and chocolate as well.

“Do you want a glass too, Ami?” I whispered.

“No thanks. My stomach is unable to digest Earthling’s milk. But please give me a small spoonful of powdered chocolate.”

I gave him one. He gobbled it down, delighted, saying how tasty it was.

A few minutes later, we were walking toward the beach.

“How will I get into your spaceship?”

“I’ll bring it to the beach.”

“Won’t you feel cold getting into the water?”

“No. This suit is much more resistant to heat and cold than you can imagine. Well, I’m going to look for the spaceship. Wait for me here and when I appear, don’t be afraid.”

“Oh, no. I’m no longer afraid of extraterrestrials.” I thought this unnecessary warning was rather funny. “Oh boy, I’m going to get into a UFO!”

The moon had gone behind some very gloomy clouds. Now it was really dark everywhere.

Ami waded into the gentle waves, dived and vanished from sight. The minutes were passing and for the first time since Ami had appeared, I had some time to myself. I began thinking.

Ami... an extraterrestrial?

Could it be true or had it all been a dream?

I waited a long time, feeling more uneasy with each minute that passed, until fear began get the better of me. I was absolutely alone there, on a totally isolated beach. I was going to be confronted by nothing less than an extraterrestrial spaceship! My imagination began to play tricks on me, with strange shadows moving between the rocks, on the sand, coming out of the water... I started to have doubts about everything.

What if Ami were some sort of evil being disguised as a boy? Talking about kindness just to win me over? No, it couldn’t be! Or could it? Kidnapped by an extraterrestrial spaceship...

Just then, a terrifying sight appeared before my eyes. From underwater, a greenish-yellow radiance appeared; then a gyrating dome, with multicoloured lights, emerged from the waves.

It was true! I was actually seeing a spaceship from another world!

Then the body of the craft appeared, egg-shaped with illuminated windows emitting a greenish-silver coloured light.

It was an alarming sight. I felt really terrified. It was one thing to talk with a kid... a kid? Who looked like a good person... but could he have been wearing a mask? And quite another thing to be alone on a beach in the darkness of the night and see a spaceship from another world appearing... a UFO that was coming to look for me, to carry me far away...

I forgot the “kid” and all that he had told me. In front of me was a menacing piece of machinery. Who knows where it was coming from? From what sinister corner of outer space? What if it was full of cruel, monstrous aliens who were coming to abduct me?

The spaceship looked much bigger than the object I had seen fall into the ocean hours before. It began to approach me, floating about ten feet above the water. It didn’t make any noise. The silence was horrible as it came closer, ever closer. I wished I could go back in time - that I had never seen any object falling from space, that I had never met any extraterrestrial and that I was sleeping peacefully, like my grandma, safe and sound in my own little bed.

This was truly a nightmare. Paralysed by fear, I couldn’t even run away. And I couldn’t take my eyes off the luminous monster that was coming to carry me away, maybe to a space zoo...

As it hovered, immense, gigantic, right over my head, I really thought I’d come to a sticky end! I was going to be squashed like a bug by that sinister bulk. A yellow light appeared in the belly of the monster, then a beam of light blinded me and I knew I was done for. Nothing for it but to surrender to His Almighty Will, as my grandma used to say.

I could feel myself being pulled upwards, like being in a sort of elevator except that my feet weren’t resting on anything. I was expecting to see those creatures with octopus heads and blood-shot eyes... when suddenly my feet hit a soft surface and I found myself in a well-lit, pleasant cabin with carpets and tapestry-covered walls.

The boy from the stars was before me, smiling, his large, kind eyes shining.

His gaze calmed me down, bringing me back to reality, to that beautiful reality that he had taught me to recognise.

He put a hand on my shoulder. “Calm down, calm down! There’s nothing bad here.”

When I was able to speak, I smiled and said, “I was really afraid.”

“I could tell. You turned green!” he said, laughing.

“I thought that... well... I thought terrible things.”

“It’s the imagination, the runaway imagination galloping among the nightmares that ‘Mr. Paranoia’ creates for himself.

“It’s... it’s true.”

“An imagination that’s out of control is a big problem, Peter; it can kill you with fear if you can’t control it; it can even invent a demon where actually there’s a good friend. Yet such things are only the projection of ugly thoughts. If we succeed in keeping our mind away from negativity, we will find a superior reality, true, simple and beautiful. Remember that.

“Okay. Then... am I on a UFO?”

“A UFO is an unidentified flying object. This, on the other hand, is completely identified. It’s a spaceship! But go ahead and call it a UFO if you want. And you can call me a Martian as well.”

That broke the tension and we both laughed.

“Come on. Come see the command centre.” Ami invited me in.

We went through a tiny, arched doorway into another room, which had a ceiling as low as the one in the room we’d just left. I found myself in a semicircular room surrounded by large, curved windows. In the centre were three reclining chairs in front of some controls and several illuminated screens. On one of them, I could see a map of the world. Everything, from the size of the chairs to the height of the ceiling, made it look like a room for kids! I could touch the ceiling when I raised my arm. There was no way an adult could fit in there.

“This is unbelievable!” I exclaimed. I went over to the windows while Ami made himself comfortable in the middle chair in front of the controls. Through the windows, I could see the seaside lights twinkling in the distance.

I felt a slight vibration on the floor and the lights disappeared. Now I could see only stars.

“Hey! What did you do with the town?”

“Look below you,” Ami answered.

I almost passed out! We were thousands of feet above the bay. All the seaside resorts were spread out below us and I could see my hometown way down there. We had flown miles into the air in an instant and I hadn’t even felt us moving!

“Cool! Super cool!”

I was feeling really excited, but the height was making me feel dizzy.

“Ami!”

“What do you want?”

“Uh, can’t we fall?”

“Well, if a person who had committed a sin should come on board, then these delicate mechanisms could fail.”

“Let’s go down then! Let’s go down!” I said, almost shouting, but then I realised from Ami’s loud laughter that he was joking.

“You’re mean!”

“Ha, ha, ha. Mr. Paranoia believed it, naturally, ha, ha, ha!”

“Very funny, HA, HA, HA,” I said, mimicking Ami, then I changed the subject...

“Can they see us from below?” I asked. When Ami had finished laughing, he explained.

“When this light is on”, he said, pointing to an oval red light above the control panel, “it means that we’re visible. When it’s off, like now, we’re invisible.”

“Invisible?”

“Yes, just like this guy from Venus sitting next to me,” he remarked very seriously, pointing to an empty seat beside him. I was alarmed, but his laughter told me it was another of his jokes.

“Hey, you space cadet, what is it you do so they can’t see us?” I asked.

“If a bicycle wheel is turning rapidly, you can’t see the spokes. We just speed up the molecules of this spaceship move.”

“That’s amazing, but I’d like them down below to see us.”

“I can’t do that. The visibility or invisibility of our spaceships, when they are visiting non-evolved worlds, is decided in according to the ‘aid plan.’ It all depends upon a ‘super-cyber’ located in the centre of this galaxy.”

“I don’t get you. Super what?”

“Cyber.”

“What’s that?”

“A computerised system, a monumental electronic brain. This spaceship is connected to the ‘super-cyber’, which decides when we can be seen and when we can’t.”

“And how does that ‘cyber’ know when to...?”

“That ‘cyber’ knows everything because it’s connected to everything. Do you want us to go somewhere special?”

“To my house in the big city! I’d like to see it from the air, but I won’t mind if that’s not possible.”

“Why say that?”

“Because it’s so far, hundreds of miles away.”

“Oh, my goodness! How terribly far away!” Ami said, looking very downcast. Then he positioned a finger on the control panel and said, “Now!”

I was getting ready to enjoy the trip looking out the window. But we had already arrived. Hundreds of miles in a fraction of a second!

I was fascinated. “Wow, what a fast way to travel!”

“I already told you that in general we don’t ‘travel,’ we ‘situate ourselves’. It’s a space-time thing, although we can also ‘travel’.”

I gazed down at the wide, illuminated streets. The city looked marvellous at night from the air. I found my neighbourhood and asked Ami to take us there. “But,” I said, ‘can we ‘travel’ slowly please? I want to enjoy the trip.’”

The control panel light was off. No one could see us.

We advanced smoothly and silently between the stars in the sky and the lights of the city below. My house appeared. It really was an extraordinary thing to see it from above.

“Do you want to check if everything is alright inside?”

“How?”

“Have a look here.”

On the large screen in front of Ami appeared an overhead view of the street. It was the same kind of apparatus that we had used to see my grandma sleeping but with a big difference; here the image was three-dimensional. It had depth. It looked as if you could stick your hand through the screen and touch everything. I tried to do that, but invisible glass stopped me.

Ami thought that was funny. “Everyone does that,” he commented.

“Everyone? Who’s everyone?”

“Don’t think that you’re the first person from a non-evolved world to go for a ride in an extraterrestrial spaceship.”

“No? I thought that I was!” I said, somewhat disappointed.

“Well, you’re wrong. But, just so that your ego won’t suffer, I’ll tell you that not very many people have had the opportunity that you’re having now.”

“Then I’m happy, Ami.”

The picture on the screen passed through the roof of my house and then surveyed the rooms from end to end. Everything was in order.

“Why doesn’t your portable television show everything in 3-D, like this one?”

“I already told you. It’s an out-of-date instrument.”

“If it’s so out of date, why don’t you give it to me?”

He hadn’t expected this question. “What? I can’t, Peter. We’re not allowed to leave samples of superior technology in worlds like this. You already know this technology wouldn’t be put to good use.”

Immediately I understood. That kind of instrument would be used for spying.

“And you could say ‘good-bye’ to any privacy for the poor citizens of planet Earth,” Ami added.

I asked him to take us on a spin around the city. We passed over my school. I saw the playground, the sports field and my classroom. I imagined showing off later in front of my class about my adventure. “I saw the school from a spaceship!” That would make me the star of the school!

“On the contrary, start talking like that and they’ll send you off to see a psychiatrist”, commented Ami seriously, as soon as he picked up on what I had been thinking.

Then I imagined how everyone at school would tease me and maybe worse. “I think you’re right. I’d better keep my mouth shut.”

“That would be wise, Peter. It’s better that you only tell the true story in the book I told you to write. Only there, and as if you had dreamed it all up. Is that a promise?”

“I promise, Ami.”

We continued flying over my city.

“Too bad it’s not daytime,” I said.

“Why?”

“I’d liked to have travelled in your spaceship by day as well, to see cities and landscapes by sunlight.”

As usual, Ami was laughing at me. “Do you want it to be daytime?” he asked me.

“I don’t think that even your powers would let you move the Sun... or would they?” I replied.

“When it comes to moving the Sun, no. But moving us, yes.”

He adjusted the controls and we began to move tremendously fast. We passed over some mountains and then several cities appeared below. From the high altitude we’d reached, they looked like little pools of light. Immediately afterwards I could make out an enormous ocean bathed in moonlight. Then, moments later, over the horizon ahead, the sky was growing light. It was amazing, dawn appeared and then the sun began to rise rapidly in the sky!

To me, that was something incredible. Seconds later, it was broad daylight. You should see what it's like to watch the Sun rising above the horizon at such speed! I thought that Ami must be moving it, like on the screen of a computer game.

"The sun is in its usual place; it's we that are moving a little fast."

"Wow!... A little?"

Ami laughed and said: "For me, this is going at the speed of a tortoise."

"Where are we?"

"Africa."

"Africa! This is faster than a spaceship!" I joked.

"Well, you said you wanted to travel by day in this spaceship, so we came to a place where it's daytime. 'If the mountain will not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed must go to the mountain'... What African country would you like to visit?"

"Um... India."

Ami's laughter told me my geography wasn't much good.

"Let's go to Asia, then. To India. Which city in India would you like to go to?"

I was going to say Singapore; that name sounded nice but then I thought maybe it was in Africa and I didn't want to make the same mistake twice. "I don't mind. You choose."

"How about Mumbai?"

"Yes. That would be fantastic, Ami."

At tremendous speed and an amazing altitude, we passed over the African continent from one coast to the other. We came to the Indian Ocean, crossing it while the Sun climbed higher and higher at a dizzying pace and a few moments later, we were flying through the sky over India.

Later, after the holiday, when I was back home, I used a world atlas to reconstruct that trip.

The spaceship braked suddenly and hung motionless.

"How come we didn't hit the windshield with that sudden stop?" I asked, surprised.

"Easy. It's a matter of cancelling out the inertia."

"Of course", I joked. "I should have known!"

Chapter 6

A Question of Measures

Our spaceship descended over the city to an altitude of around 300 feet. We then began our tour of the skies over Mumbai. I felt as if I was watching a movie, or even dreaming. Thousands and thousands of people wearing tunics and turbans of a variety of colours, cows in the streets, houses and buildings very different from those in my country, many street vendors. All that, seen from the air... fantastic! But what attracted my attention most of all was the huge number of people. For me, that was really something else!

No one could see us. The indicator light was turned off. But suddenly I came back to 'reality'.

"My grandma!"

"What about her now?"

"It's daytime! She'll be up and worried that I'm not there. Let's go back!"

I was a constant source of amusement for Ami. "Peter, she's sleeping soundly, as usual. On the other side of the world it's only a little after midnight. Here it's around ten in the morning."

"Yesterday or today?" I asked, confused by all these time changes.

"Tomorrow!" he replied, doubled up laughing.

"Seriously, Ami, I'm not happy."

"How odd!" teased Ami. "But don't let it disturb you, Peter. We still have a lot of time. What time does she get up?"

"I don't know. I thought that she was always awake. Well, at least that's what she says, that at night she can't sleep at all." We both laughed.

"Then she still has several hours of 'not being able to sleep' left... We have all this time ahead of us, plus we can streeetch time..."

"Anyway, I'm still worried. Why can't we go and see?"

"What do you want to see?"

"Maybe she woke up."

“It’s better we check from here so that you’ll see I’m right” Ami said. He murmured under his breath “some Earthlings make their life so difficult!” and beamed me a roguish smile.

Ami adjusted the controls on a screen and there was the West Coast of my country, seen from high above. Then it showed us nose-diving towards Earth at a fantastic speed. Soon I could make out the bay, the seaside, the house on the beach, the roof and my grandma. It was incredible. We seemed to be right there! She was still sleeping with her mouth half-open, in the same position as earlier.

“You can’t say that she has trouble sleeping, can you?” observed Ami mischievously. Then he added, “There’s something else we can do to ease your mind.”

Ami picked up a sort of microphone and motioned for me to keep quiet. He pressed a button and said, “Pssst!” My grandma heard that, woke up, got out of bed and went into the dining room. We could hear her footsteps and her breathing. She saw the leftovers of my dinner on the table, so she cleaned up everything, leaving the plates in the kitchen. Then she headed for my bedroom, opened the door and turned on the light. She looked toward my bed. We could see everything perfectly. It seemed as if I were really asleep in my bed... but something was missing. I wasn’t sure what it was, but Ami knew. He took the microphone and began to breathe into it. My grandma listened to this breathing and thought it was coming from me asleep there. She turned off the light, closed the door and headed for her bedroom.

“Happy now?”

“Yes, I am now, but I can hardly believe it! It’s night for her there and day for us here, on the other side of the planet...”

“You people are too conditioned by time and distance, Peter.”

“I don’t understand.”

“What would you think about leaving on a trip today and returning yesterday?”

“You’re trying to drive me nuts! Could we go and visit China?”

“Of course. What city would you like to see?”

This time I wasn’t going to make a fool of myself. “Tokyo,” I answered confidently and proudly.

“Then let’s go to Tokyo... the capital of Japan,” Ami said, trying not to laugh.

We travelled northeast across India. When we arrived at the Himalayas, the spaceship halted.

“We have orders,” said Ami, as strange symbols appeared on the screen. “We’re going to leave some evidence. The ‘super-cyber’ is informing us that we have to be seen by someone somewhere.”

“What fun! Who and where?”

“I don’t know. We’re going to be guided. We’re arriving now.”

We had used the instantaneous transfer system. Hovering in the air at about 150 feet up, we were above a forest. The light on the control panel indicated that we were visible. There was a lot of snow down there.

“This is Alaska,” commented Ami, identifying the place by a flashing dot on a map showing on one of the screens.

The Sun began to go down behind some hills nearby. The path of our spaceship was tracing out an enormous triangle in the sky and changing colours all the while.

“Why are we doing this?”

“To make an impression. We have to attract the attention of our friend down there.”

Ami was watching a man on the screen. I looked out the window to see if I could spot him below and found him between the trees. He was wearing a red hunting jacket, carrying a shotgun and looking very startled. He pointed his gun at us. Frightened, I instinctively crouched down to avoid a shotgun blast.

Ami found my anxiety amusing. “Don’t be afraid. This UFO is bullet-proof, and it’s a lot of other-things-proof, too.”

We ascended to a higher altitude, emitting multicoloured flashing lights the whole time.

“It’s important that this man never forgets this encounter.”

I thought that he would surely never forget the sight of us flying through the air and that it hadn’t been necessary to scare him quite so much. I told Ami this.

“You’re wrong. Thousands of people have seen our spaceships pass by, but if at the time they are absorbed in their own ‘nightmare’, afterwards they don’t remember... they forget all about the experience. We have kept very accurate statistics on this phenomenon.”

“Why does that man have to see us?”

“I don’t know exactly. Maybe his testimony will be important to some other interesting, special person. Or maybe he’s that interesting, special person himself. I’m going to focus the ‘senso-meter’ on him.”

The man appeared on another of the screens, but he looked almost transparent. A very beautiful golden light shone in the centre of his chest.

“What’s that light?”

“It shows his level of evolution.”

“Level of evolution?”

“Where he is on the scale from ‘beast’ to ‘angel’,” Ami explained. I realised this instrument measured the degree of good or evil and I said “OK.”

“He has seven hundred and fifty measures.”

“And what does that mean?”

“That he’s interesting.”

“Why is he interesting?”

“Because his evolutionary level is very high for an Earthling who spends time hunting.

“I hate hunters,” I said.

“You shouldn’t hate anyone, Peter.”

“Well... It’s not really hating but more like anger, like outrage. How can they be so cruel?”

“It’s a problem of lack of solidarity; the beast is running wild inside the psyche. But here we have a different situation. For this man, who has so many measures, it’s not a lack of solidarity or evolution but he has blocked its expression. I guess that among his family or friends, the sport of hunting is highly esteemed, and though he doesn’t really like it himself, he has allowed himself to be influenced by their opinion. I think that this sighting will help him, so that some day he’ll behave according to his real evolutionary level.”

Ami focused the screen onto a bear. It also looked transparent but the light on its chest shone much less brightly than the man’s.

“Two hundred measures,” Ami announced. Then he focused on a fish. The light was very faint.

“Fifty measures.”

“What about you, Ami? How many measures do you have?”

“Seven hundred sixty measures,” he replied.

“Only ten more than the hunter!” I was surprised by such a small difference between an Earthling and Ami.

“That’s right. Our levels are similar.”

“But I thought that you must be much more evolved than Earthlings.”

“On Earth there are some people with 800 measures, Peter.”

“More than you!”

“Of course. I have the advantage of knowing certain things that they don’t, but here on Earth there are people who are very valuable: teachers, artists, nurses, fire-fighters...”

“Fire-fighters!”

“Don’t you think it’s noble to risk your life for others?”

“You’re right, but my uncle, the nuclear physicist, must surely be very valuable.”

“That guy who says that ‘intelligence killed God? Valuable? Maybe only famous! What does your uncle do in his work in physics?”

“He’s developing a new weapon, a very destructive ultrasound ray. It’s fantastic!”

“Well, if he can’t appreciate that human intelligence is but a reflection of a superior intelligence, if his short-sightedness makes him arrogant, clumsy and disrespectful of religious faiths, and, worse still, if he dedicates the talent he was given to manufacturing weapons... then I don’t believe that his level is very high. Do you see?”

“What? But he’s a wise man!” I protested.

“Once again, you’re confusing things. Your uncle has a great deal of information at his disposal and a good memory, and he’s clever and quick at seeing relationships between data, but this doesn’t necessarily mean that he’s an intelligent person, much less a wise one. A computer can have an impressive data bank and undertake incredible operations, but that doesn’t make it intelligent. Do you think a man is intelligent if he’s digging a grave that he himself is about to fall into?”

“No, but...”

“Weapons turn against those who use them.”

This statement didn’t seem very obvious to me, but I decided to believe Ami. Nevertheless, I was confused. My uncle was my hero, and such an intelligent man!

“He has a good computer in his head, but that’s all. What we have here is a problem of terms: on Earth, people are called intelligent or wise when they are good at using only one of their brains. But there are two.”

“What? Two brains, Ami?”

“Well, it would be better to say two ‘comprehension centres’. One is the ‘computer,’ the head, the seat of ideas; we can call that the ‘intellectual centre’. It processes information related to logic, to the earthly and practical things of life. The other one is the ‘emotional centre’. It deals with emotions and has to do with the profound things of life, with feelings, with eternal, universal truths, with creativity and intuition, and with wisdom and love. The degree of balance between the two centres creates the light that you saw in that man’s chest on the screen. Good balance, more light; bad balance, less light.”

“Not everybody has a good balance between those two centres?” I asked.

“No, Peter, not in your world, and that’s the main problem. That’s why we don’t consider as intelligent or wise many people that you would say are. For us, intelligence or wisdom is the mark of someone who has both centres in harmony, and harmony means ultimately that the intellect must be in the service of the heart.”

“Why,” I asked.

“Because the intellect is only a tool, while it’s in the heart that the deepest human motivations are to be found; that’s the true reality, what makes people happy or unhappy, which is most important of all. And that’s why the intellect must be used to help human beings to be more happy. But many people on Earth who are regarded as ‘intelligent’ believe it’s the other way round, that what come first are the cold cerebral calculations they make, based on superficial data or theories; they can’t see what’s really important, what truly matters - human happiness - and they simply ignore it.”

Since it was easier for me to understand Ami when he gave examples, I asked for one.

“OK”, said Ami, “some crazy guys in the fishing industry are busy thinking, ‘if we catch ten whales we earn one million. If we catch *all* the whales, we could earn multi-millions!’”

I started laughing because Ami was making faces like mad while he was saying this.

“People like that see only what’s superficial, the money. But they don’t see what’s deeper, the damage that they are causing to others, and to themselves. They don’t see and they don’t care because they have a lack of balance between their intellectual centre and their emotional centre.”

“Now I understand. And what about those whose emotional centre is better developed than their intellectual centre?” I asked.

“They’re the exact opposite. You would call them ‘well-intentioned but foolish people.’ Due to their intellectual limitation, they can’t comprehend the nature of the world they’re living in. That makes them not such good people after all.”

“Why?” I asked, curious.

“Because it’s easy for the others, those ruthless people you call intelligent, to brainwash them and manipulate them into harming themselves or others, while all the time thinking that they’re doing good! The affection of someone who isn’t able to use reason cannot be trusted.”

“What’s missing, then?”

“Emotion must be illuminated by intellect to create wisdom, and intellect must be illuminated by emotion to transform into real intelligence.”

Much later, thinking about those things, I understood that Ami was right. I thought about all the bad news we see on television and how, in every case when human beings make other people suffer, there had been a lack of balance, either of

understanding or of feeling. A well-balanced person, by contrast, couldn't make anyone unhappy.

"Intellectual development must harmonise with emotional development. This is the only way that a truly intelligent or wise person can function."

"I'm getting the message, Ami, thanks. So what about me? How many measures do I have?"

"I can't tell you that."

"Why not?"

"Because if your level is high, you'll become too proud."

"I don't get you. I thought pride was something very good..."

"Taking pride in working hard to improve oneself is sanity. But pride that make us arrogant and look down on others, that's vanity!"

"Ohhhh. I understand."

"And vain pride turns off that inner light."

When I thought about it, I could see Ami was right.

"We need to be humble, Peter. Behind the great design of this universe there is Supreme Intelligence so humble that it never shows off, or demands our gratitude. We are simply invited to witness all that is before us."

"How wonderful! All these oceans, planets, galaxies... and no applause is asked for..."

"That's because Supreme Intelligence is just that. It has more measures than everyone," Ami said, laughing.

"By the way, if I promise you that I won't get conceited if my level is high, why don't you tell me now how many measures I do have."

"But if it's low, you're going to feel veeery unhappy!"

I didn't much like this idea and I just said 'Oh!'

"Look, we're leaving now."

We had instantaneously returned to the Himalayas, on the other side of the planet.

Chapter 7

Lights in the Sky

We were advancing towards a distant ocean and seconds later, flying over it. Then some islands appeared below. Now we were high above Japan and descended over the city of Tokyo. I thought we were going to see houses with pointy roofs, but what we saw most of all were skyscrapers, modern avenues, parks and automobiles.

“We’ve been seen,” said Ami, gesturing towards the illuminated light on the control panel.

People in the street were beginning to mill around, pointing above their heads in our direction. Once again, the multicoloured exterior lights went on. Evidently, when Ami’s ship decided to put in appearance, it was made absolutely certain that nobody missed the sighting!

Our altitude was still fairly high and we only stayed there for about two minutes.

“Another sighting,” said Ami, reading the signals that appeared on screen. “We’re going to be transferred again.”

Daylight faded suddenly. Only the stars remained twinkling outside the windows. Below, there wasn’t much to be seen other than a small city in the far distance, a few lights, and a road with a single car coming our way.

I went over to the screen that was in front of Ami. The entire panorama appeared on it, perfectly illuminated. What hadn’t been visible at first, because of the darkness, was very clear on the monitor. Everything looked as bright as day; then Ami zoomed in and the image on screen enlarged, without losing any clarity. I could see that the automobile was green in colour and that there was a young couple in it. We were at a height of only about 20 metres and, according to the control panel, we were visible. I decided that from then on, I would use the screen - its image was clearer than reality itself.

When the vehicle had nearly reached us, the driver pulled up by the side of the road. The occupants got out and began to gesture and shout, looking up at us with their faces contorted.

“What are they saying?” I asked.

“They’re asking for communication, for contact. They’re a couple of UFO watchers, although in their case, their interest is a bit extreme. We could call them something like ‘extraterrestrial worshippers.’”

“Communicate with them, then,” I said to him, concerned about the way they were acting.

They knelt and began to pray, looking up towards the spaceship.

“I can’t. I must obey the strict orders of the ‘aid plan.’ Communication isn’t established whenever anyone happens to think it’s a good idea but only when it’s decided from ‘above’.”

“Oh, really?”

“Besides, I can’t take advantage of the ignorance of these poor people.”

“Take advantage... how?”

“This couple consider us to be Gods.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“What’s wrong is that it’s a lie, because we are not Gods, in case you didn’t realise!”

“Sure, but...”

“Worshipping any of the creatures of the Universe as if they were Gods is like confusing the fruit with the tree.”

“And that’s serious?”

“It’s not very serious for someone who doesn’t know much about these things. But it would be very serious if we claimed to be Gods in line with the mistaken religiosity of those persons. If they were to consider us as brothers and sisters who, while more advanced, are definitely not Gods, that would be another matter.”

I thought that Ami should show this couple the error of their ways. He knew what I was thinking and said, “Peter, we can’t go around correcting the false beliefs of the inhabitants of all the non-evolved worlds, especially when they already have scriptures, religions, spiritual books, and psychologists too, there to help them. What those two people are doing is nothing compared to other mistakes that are being made in these worlds. And we can’t intervene there either, even though horrible things are happening. At this very moment great numbers of people are being killed and tortured on many planets, including this one.”

“Seriously?”

“Very seriously.”

“And you guys can’t do anything?”

“No, Peter. We can’t. There are many reasons that I have already given, and there are some more, but for now I’m not going to addle your head any further.”

This seemed a good moment to bring up something that so often, during my long thirteen years, had bothered me. “Sometimes, it seems to me that God isn’t so good, Ami. How can he allow these things to happen?”

Ami stood up and, looking through the windows, said, "Let me tell you something about Supreme Intelligence. Nobody's hands can be tied..."

I did not understand what he meant by that, and I asked him to explain.

"I mean that Supreme Intelligence works not by control but by freedom. Any individual can do what they want to do, what they choose. But - and this is the point - afterwards they must live with the consequences, because everybody harvests what they sow".

"I've got it, but still I don't understand why some people choose such ugly things as killing or causing pain to others."

"It's all a matter of evolutionary levels, Peter. People choose ugly or beautiful things according to their evolutionary level. Later you will understand better what I want to say to you. And by the way, just as different people have different evolutionary levels, so do planets."

"Planets!"

"And stars, and galaxies. Everything is evolving because it is all part of a Universe that is expanding, evolving, reaching towards its goal."

"Interesting! I've never thought about it..."

"On non-evolved planets like this one, people generally have not reached a high evolutionary level. That's why so many people chose ugliness. But in more advanced worlds, people choose beautiful things and experience a more pleasant reality. Remember that there are thousands of worlds that are even less advanced than yours. You would find life there unbearably hard, as you would have done on this planet millions years ago."

"The age of the dinosaurs?"

"Right. This was a hostile world, filled with danger. Volcanoes constantly erupted. The struggle for survival was very violent; everything was aggressive or poisonous. Animals had claws and fangs and many plants were flesh-eating too. But those creatures were adapted to that environment and to them life didn't seem especially cruel. They didn't see any problem in tearing other creatures to pieces."

"And this Supreme Intelligence you've been telling me about permits such a 'loving' system?"

"I've already tried to show you that we can only appreciate the light when we've known the dark, and I've explained to you that those beings don't have your sensitivity. Because of that, you don't live in a world like theirs; nor do they live in a world like this one."

"Hmm." Ami hadn't succeeded in convincing me.

"But today, because a more advanced level of evolution has been achieved in this world, life is the richer for it. It's no longer just a fight for survival; the species that

inhabit now Earth are not as primitive as before. And yet, we can't say that this is an evolved world. At this very moment there are countless abandoned and starving children..."

"You see? It doesn't look to me like the work of a very loving God..."

"The suffering is caused by humans. I'll show you what I mean," said Ami, adjusting some controls, and scenes of war appeared on a screen. Soldiers were launching rockets against some buildings, destroying them and everyone who lived in them.

"This is happening right now in a country on Earth, but we can't do any more than what we're doing. In the evolution of each planet, country, or person, we must not intervene any more than we are allowed."

Images of mass execution by firing squad appeared on the screen.

I asked him to turn off the picture, adding pointedly, "I'm touched to see so much divine kindness!"

"Don't be sarcastic about these things, Peter. I've already told you, it's not what you call God that is holding those weapons. That is human evil, unconsciousness, ignorance and stupidity. These people have no idea how their violence is impacting on each individual person's evolutionary project, something so sacred..."

"A personal what?"

"Evolutionary project", said Ami.

"What's that?"

"I mean they are ignorant of what it means to kill. But I want to explain something about death, Peter, whether it comes about through violence, accident, illness or old age. No one disappears for ever and souls who love each other will find each other again. For every life we live in the physical world, we need a body; it's like wearing a costume. But behind the costume lies our real self, and we meet again with our real selves when each life comes to an end. And what is life? It's like school; we go through many classes and courses, all the while wearing different 'costumes'. Then our real selves can benefit from all those classes we attended, where we went to learn new lessons and gain new skills. That's the way our real selves can keep making progress.

Nobody appears out of thin air, neither does anyone disappear into nothing, Peter. It's just our costumes that change. We are born with the inheritance of everything we have already experienced and each time we move on, we take with us what we have learned, and we keep on learning for ever."

"All very nice, but sometimes I don't know whether or not to believe there's something more after this life..."

"For you it's a matter of believing or not believing; I simply remember other lives of mine. I was a beast and I died many times destroyed by other beasts. I have worn many bodies; I died and I was born a thousand times. That way I was evolving. Later

I was a human being but to begin with, one with a low evolutionary level. I killed and was killed. I was cruel and was treated cruelly in return. But little by little, I was learning to overcome the savage part of me. I didn't always succeed, but I continued learning, and here I am."

"That's not what I've been taught about what happens when people die."

"I am trying to tell you that before getting to be who I am now, by passing through many existences, I have gained some experience and some wisdom. Among other things, I've learned to try to improve myself. I didn't arrive 'Instant Ami', the way you see me now. It doesn't work like that! I am here as the result of all that has gone before. It has taken a long time to reach this level of overcoming my lower nature. And you too, you are the result of what you have been through before."

This certainly was a new lesson for me, and I liked it because it made something clear to me. I had never come up with an explanation for my 'luck' in being born human and not a worm, for instance, or a dog. More than that, I was lucky enough to be born in a civilised country and with a decent education. More lucky still, I was in good health, I wasn't too bad looking and I was considered reasonably intelligent. Why so many privileges? Ami had given me an answer: 'I am what I am because I have earned it, due to my previous efforts; it's what I deserve'."

"The good and the bad," Ami pointed out.

"What?"

"I mean those not-so-wonderful things about your life, you have earned them too."

That made me recall things I had complained about to God, for instance, like not coming first in my class at school, not being born rich, and for not having parents like other children. I saw clearly that it was silly complaining, that everybody has earned everything they have, the good and the bad, just as Ami said.

Then I thought of a perfect way of summarising this new lesson: 'I am what I am because I have earned it, due to my previous errors and efforts; it's what I deserve'.

Ami continued. "Errors like those soldiers are making transgress a universal law, the one that says, 'You shall not kill.' That is very serious, and yet we still mustn't intervene. But don't think that those who are suffering are doing it because of the 'cruelty of God.' No, that's not what's happening. Supreme Intelligence ensures that each one receives what he or she needs to learn, in order to grow in love and wisdom. Perhaps those who are hit by a bomb or a bullet today were brutal to others in an earlier life, or sometime else in this one. Take those soldiers who are now killing people they don't even know. The suffering they will have to go through themselves in the future will bring home to them the full meaning of what they did to those others. Nor will the people at the top who gave the orders be spared".

"Divine punishment," I said.

"No, Peter, it's not punishment but the universal law of cause and effect, which works like a boomerang. Everything you give out must come back to you. The idea is not to punish but to help evolve. Someone said that 'suffering is the master of fools'. And

it's true, because nobody would be fool enough to kill another if he knew it was going to come right back at him. Do you understand?"

"No."

"Such a person is not leaving the Universe any choice except to teach him by making him go through what he did to someone else, so that he really knows what it's like, to feel the pain and to understand that with his own flesh. Then he'll learn the wisdom that what we do to another we do also to ourselves."

"That means all the suffering that we go through is because of the bad things we did before..."

"Not all, Peter. Sometimes we must face tough situations, whose purpose is to teach us to become more sensitive, to learn new lessons, to discover strengths we never knew we had, and to gain experience that will be needed for future accomplishments. It's like a student of medicine who has to work around the clock, sometimes spending nights without sleeping, and having to witness dreadful things. Then he learns how to cope with the worst that can happen, and this is important if he is going to be able to help to heal people to the best of his ability. There are some missions that require a whole life, or even more than that, Peter."

We could still see the two UFO watchers on the monitor; they remained in a trance-like state, their arms raised towards us as if they were appealing to us to bring them on board.

"Couldn't you tell them by speaking through a microphone that they're wasting their time?"

"I already told you that I can't, Peter. A person, or indeed a world, can receive our direct help only after reaching a certain evolutionary level. Until that time, it would be a violation of the general system of evolution. But this couple hasn't yet arrived at that level and neither has humanity on Earth. Therefore, we can only help indirectly; in your case, it's why you must write that book. It will reveal some interesting facts, both to this couple and to many other people."

The couple continued to direct their prayers toward our spaceship, but we were getting tired of watching them.

"They are being given the gift of a very prolonged sighting," said Ami.

"Too long. How boring!" I remarked.

Well, let's look at something that's more fun."

Ami tuned in to Japanese television while we waited for the "super-cyber" to take us away from there. With his usual good humour he watched a news program. A reporter with a microphone in his hand was interviewing people on the street and a woman was talking and gesturing towards the sky. I didn't understand anything she was saying, but I could tell that she was talking about her encounter with a UFO... ours, of course. Other people gave their versions of the story. I knew that Ami could

understand the language because he was very amused watching that program. Maybe he was using the ‘interpreter.’”

“What are they saying?” I asked.

“That they saw a ‘UFO’ There must be a lot of crazy people around!” he joked, with a smile.

Then a man wearing glasses and with a tie appeared on the screen. He was drawing diagrams on a blackboard while he gave explanations. The drawings were of the solar system, the Earth and the other planets. He talked for a long time - I assumed that he was a Japanese scientist who specialised in astronomy.

“What’s he saying?” I asked again.

“That considering all the evidence, it’s been ‘scientifically proven’ that there’s no intelligent life in the whole galaxy, except for that on Earth. He also says that the people who saw the supposed UFO were suffering from a mass hallucination and he recommends that they all see a psychiatrist.”

“Seriously?” I asked.

“Seriously,” he responded, laughing.

The scientist continued talking.

“What’s he saying now?”

“That maybe a civilisation ‘as advanced’ as this could exist, but only one in every two thousand galaxies, according to his brilliant calculations.”

“And what’s that supposed to mean?”

“When he finds out that in this galaxy alone there are thousands of civilisations, and that, compared to them, his world is prehistoric, the poor guy’s going to go crazy. Even more crazy than he is now.”

We both laughed for a long time. For me it was very funny to listen to a scientist saying that UFOs didn’t exist... and there I was, listening to him from a UFO! We stayed for a few more minutes until the red light went out, indicating that we were invisible again.

“We’re free to go.”

“Then can we continue our trip?” I asked.

“Of course. Where would you like to go now?”

“Ummm. Let’s go to... the Pyramids!”

“It’s still night there. Look.” We had already arrived.

A light from the spaceship illuminated a row of three huge, stone pyramids that seemed to have been waiting there for millennia...

"Is this Egypt?"

"Certainly."

"We got here so fast!"

"You think that was fast? Wait... look out the window now."

We were flying over a very strange desert. It was night. The sky was too dark, almost black, except for the bluish moonlight.

"Where are we? Arizona? The Sahara?"

"This is the moon."

"The moon?"

"Yes, the moon."

I looked up, towards what I had thought was the moon. "Then that must be..."

"That's the Earth."

"The Earth?"

"Yes, the Earth. That's where your dear grandma is fast asleep."

I was fascinated. It really was my planet - a beautiful blue colour. It seemed incredible to me that something so small could contain so many things that were so large, like mountains, oceans and continents.

Without knowing why, I began seeing images stored in my memory. I remembered a stream from my childhood, a wall covered with moss, some bees in a garden, horses grazing in the country on a summer afternoon. All of those things were there, on that small blue globe floating among the stars.

Suddenly I noticed the Sun, a distant star but much brighter than it looked from Earth.

"Why does it look so small?"

"Because the moon doesn't have an atmosphere to act like a magnifying glass. That's why from Earth everything looks bigger than from here."

I didn't like the look of the surface of the moon. It had seemed more impressive from Earth. It was a world so desolate and gloomy that I felt apprehensive.

"Can't we go somewhere that's prettier?"

"Somewhere inhabited?" asked Ami.

“Of course! But not by monsters!”

“Then we’ll have to go far away.”

He moved the controls, the spaceship vibrated gently and everything turn black. Outside the windows, a luminous white mist appeared, twinkling with lights.

“What’s happening?” I asked, a little frightened.

“We’re getting situated.”

“Where are we getting situated?”

“On a very distant planet. We’ll have to wait a few minutes. For now we’re going to listen to some music.”

Ami pressed a button on the control panel. Some gentle, strange sounds filled the cabin. My friend closed his eyes and prepared to listen with enjoyment. The sounds were rather odd - a very low, sustained vibration began to rock the command centre. Then another very high note cut off suddenly; the silence lasted a few seconds. Next, high and low notes followed rapidly one after another. Once again, the lowest note got higher little by little, while rushing noises and some little bells marked the rhythm, which kept changing.

Ami appeared enraptured. I guessed he must know the ‘melody’ very well because with his lips and gentle hand movements he anticipated what he was going to hear. I hated to interrupt him, but I didn’t like that ‘music’ one bit.

“Ami,” I called out. He didn’t answer; he was concentrating hard on what sounded like electrical static from an old radio!

“Ami,” I said louder.

“Oh! Sorry! What is it?”

“Excuse me, but I don’t like this.”

“Oh, of course. That’s normal. To enjoy this music you need a prior ‘initiation’. I’ll look for something that will sound more familiar to you.”

He punched another button on the control panel. A melody with a happy beat began to play and I liked it immediately. The lead instrument sounded like the smokestack on an old-fashioned steam locomotive going at top speed.

“That’s cool! What’s the instrument that sounds like a train?”

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed Ami, pretending to be horrified. “You’ve just insulted the most exquisite throat on my planet. Fancy confusing this beautiful voice... with the noise made by a train!”

I felt ashamed of my clumsiness.

"I'm sorry. Please. I didn't know... But that's really good puffing!" I said, trying to retrieve the situation.

"Blasphemer! Heretic!" Ami exclaimed, while pretending to pull his hair out. "How can you say that the glory of my world... puffs!"

We broke into gales of laughter.

That music made me want to dance.

"That's what it's for," said Ami. "Let's dance!"

He jumped up from his chair and began to dance happily while clapping his hands.

"Dance! Dance!" he encouraged me. "Let yourself go. You want to dance but there's a part of you that is holding you back. Discover the freedom to be yourself. Free yourself!"

I put aside my usual timidity and enthusiastically threw myself into dancing.

"Bravo!" Ami congratulated me.

We danced a long time. It felt really good, like when we were running and jumping on the beach. In overcoming my timidity, Ami had enabled me to express my real self...

Then the music stopped.

"A little something to relax with now," he said, going over to the control panel. He pressed another button and classical music began to play. It was familiar to me.

"Hey, that's Earth music."

"Of course. Bach. It's fabulous. Don't you like it?"

"I think... I do. Do you like it, too?"

"Naturally. If I didn't, I wouldn't have it here on the spaceship."

"That's good. I was beginning to think that everything about us must seem 'non-evolved' to extraterrestrials."

"You're wrong." Ami punched another button on the control panel.

"...Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do..."

"But that's John Lennon... The Beatles!"

I was very surprised because I had begun to think that everything on Earth was pretty useless compared with the wonders that extraterrestrials were used to.

“Peter, when music is good, it’s universally good. Collections of good Earth music exist in several galaxies, just like the music from any other world or epoch. The same thing happens with all the arts. We keep films and recordings of everything good that’s created on your planet. Good art is the language of love, and love is a universal presence.”

“...Imagine all the people
Living life in peace...”

Ami, with his eyes closed, seemed to be enjoying each note.

By the time John Lennon had finished singing, we had arrived at another inhabited world.

Part Two

Chapter 8

Ophir!

The white mist dispersed. I approached the windows and I could look down onto meadows bathed in soft orange light. This was another world! I was very excited.

Little by little, we began to descend into the beautiful, autumnal landscape.

“How incredible! I’m looking at another planet!”

“I’m pleased that you are enjoying the trip.”

“This world is very beautiful, Ami!”

“Look at the sun,” Ami said to me, smiling.

An enormous reddish disc stood out overhead. It appeared at least fifty times larger than our sun looks from Earth.

“It’s four hundred times as large,” he explained.

“Four hundred times; how awesome! But it doesn’t look as if it were that enormous...”

“Because it’s very far away.”

“What world is this?”

“This is the planet Ophir,” replied Ami.

“Ophir... I like this name. Is it inhabited?”

“Sure. Its inhabitants have an Earthly origin, but they came here many thousands of years ago.”

“W... What?”

That remark stood everything I knew about history on its head! Cave dwellers could travel to the stars millennia ago?

Ami moved some controls and said, “so many things are unknown to you in your world, Peter. Once upon a time, on a continent on Earth, thousands of years ago, there existed a civilisation similar to yours, one that’s disappeared now. Then...

“Atlantis?” I interrupted.

“Look, Peter, some fables hold part of the historical truth even when there has been a lot of distortion,” Ami said. “Then something very ugly happened there, something very unfortunate...”

“What happened, Ami?”

“The scientific level of those who ruled had gone far beyond their level of solidarity; therefore, they became ‘intelligent-evil’ as you would say. Achieving such great technological knowledge and power made them full of pride and arrogance, blinding them to the wisdom of the heart and to all essential and profound things. Having such destructive power in their hands, what happened next had to happen.”

“They destroyed themselves?”

“Naturally, though some of them fled to other continents and survived. But they took with them their folly, their pride and aggression. Since then your world is the way it is. Your modern civilisation, and you yourself, are the result of all that. You are a descendent of those who survived.”

“It’s incredible that a former civilisation really existed. And what about the people of Ophir, how did they arrive on this planet?”

“We brought them here. A little before the disaster, we rescued all those who had seven hundred measures or more, although very few were saved because the average evolutionary condition of human beings at that time was one hundred measures less than today. Earth and its creatures have evolved since then and at present there are many more people at that level.”

“And if there were a disaster on Earth, would you rescue some people again?”

“The idea is not to have any disaster, but if it’s unavoidable, then we would have to rescue everyone who has over seven hundred measures. They would be taken to populate a new world.”

That made me very happy! I kind of assumed I would be among those rescued.

“Really? Great! And where would you take us?”

“I said only those who exceeded seven hundred measures.”

“Well, what about me, Ami, do I have seven hundred measures?”

“I told you that I can’t answer that.”

“How can you find out who has seven hundred measures or more?”

“All those who dedicate themselves to the good of everyone and are motivated only by the spirit of solidarity, have that level of measures or more. And when I say ‘everyone’, I don’t just mean family, friends, political party or whatever. And when I say, ‘the good,’ I’m referring to what is in harmony with the fundamental law of the Universe.”

“There’s that famous law again. Can you explain it to me now?”

“Not yet. Have patience.”

“But why is it so important?”

“Because if you don’t know this law, you won’t know the difference between good and evil. Many people kill, thinking that they’re doing good. They ignore the universal law. Others torture, plant bombs, create arms, destroy Nature and cause those weaker than themselves to suffer. They do all this while thinking that they’re doing something good. But they’re all doing great evil without realising it because they don’t know the fundamental law of the Universe. Nevertheless, they will have to pay for breaking that law, because they must learn that some things shouldn’t ever be done.”

“You said before that God doesn’t punish.”

“Peter, I’ve already explained that everything that we do comes back to us. If we do good, we receive good in return. If we do evil, we can’t expect to receive anything nice in return.”

“And this always happens, Ami?”

“Well, when somebody recognizes clearly that he or she has made a mistake, then there’s no need for further correction.”

“It never occurred to me that things worked this way.”

“Well, they do, and it’s more important than you think. If only the people on your planet would understand this principle and put it into practice, your world would turn into a veritable paradise.”

I sat down on the chair next to Ami to observe that beautiful planet on the screen. I was impatient to see its inhabitants.

We were cruising slowly at an altitude of about three hundred metres. I could see many flying vehicles similar to ours; as they got closer I saw that they varied in shape and size.

I didn’t see any great mountain ranges or deserts on that planet. Everything was carpeted with multi-coloured vegetation, spread out in areas of distinct shades of green, brown and orange. There were many hills, lagoons, rivers and lakes with luminous sky-blue water. It looked like something out of Paradise!

I could make out some semi-spherical houses that formed a circle around a main building. Many were constructed like pyramids, some built with stepped sides, others smooth, with triangular or square bases. But most of all, there were those semi-spherical houses, in light colours, but very often white.

Then the inhabitants of that world began to appear. From the height of the spaceship, I could see them travelling on roads and playing in rivers and lagoons. They looked like humans, at least from a distance. Many of them wore loose tunics of different colours.

There were no cities to be seen.

“There are none in Ophir or in any other evolved world. Big cities are a prehistoric way of living together,” Ami said.

“Why?”

“Because they have so many defects. One of them is that too many people living in the same place produces an imbalance that affects both the people and the planet.”

“The planet?”

“Planets are living beings, with greater or lesser evolution. Only life produces life; that’s why all is alive. Everything is interdependent. Everything is interrelated. What happens to the Earth affects the people who inhabit it, and the other way round as well.”

“Why do too many people in the same place produce an imbalance?”

“Because they’re not happy all stacked up together, and the Earth can feel this. People need space, trees, flowers, water and fresh air.”

“Even the more evolved people?” I asked, confused, because Ami was hinting that in advanced societies, people lived in countryside settings and I had thought it was going to be just the opposite: artificial cities in orbit, immense citadel-buildings, subterranean metropolises with millions of people, plastic and metal everywhere, just like in sci-fi movies.

“The more evolved people are, the more they need to live in contact with Nature,” Ami responded.

“I thought it would be the other way around, that only savages lived close to Nature.”

“If people on Earth didn’t think so back-to-front, they wouldn’t be in danger of destroying themselves again. You can live amidst Nature in a very civilised manner, Peter.”

“What about these people who came to Ophir - didn’t they want to return to Earth?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“They had left the nest. Grown-ups don’t go back – it would be too small for them.”

As we approached some white, very modern-looking buildings, we began to descend.

“On an evolved planet, this is the nearest thing to a city. It’s a centre of organisation, for assistance, holding meetings and for cultural presentations. People come here occasionally to meet other people, to join in social gatherings, a celebration or to attend some artistic, spiritual, or scientific event. But no one lives here.”

Ami stopped the spaceship at a height of around five metres and enthusiastically exclaimed, “Now you’re going to meet your ancestors from thousands of years ago!”

“Are we going to leave the spaceship?”

“Not on your life!”

“Why not?”

“Because the germs you’re carrying could kill everyone in this world.”

“So why don’t they hurt you?”

“I’ve been “vaccinated”. But before I return to my planet I have to undergo a purification treatment.”

Many people were walking around. When one of them passed near the windows of our spaceship, something alarming dawned on me: they were gigantic!

“Ami, these aren’t Earthlings. They’re monsters!”

“Why?” he joked. “Because they’re around twice as tall as the people in your world?”

“Twice as tall!”

“A little more, a little less. But they don’t feel that they’re especially tall.”

“But you say that they come from Earth, and there people are only half as tall...”

“That’s because the conditions of life of this planet are different than those on Earth and encourage more growth.”

No one paid us the slightest bit of attention. They were slender, tanned people with slim hips and good posture. They all looked really calm, relaxed and friendly. Their eyes reflected serenity; they were large and luminous, almond-shaped, like those that appear on Egyptian paintings.

“The ancient Egyptians, Mayans, Incas, Greeks, Aztecs and Celts among other peoples, share a common ancestry with the people you see here,” Ami explained to me. “Those ethnic groups on Earth come from the remains of that ancient civilisation which we were talking about. These friends you see here are direct descendants of what you know as Atlantians.”

In general, the people were not walking alone but in groups. As they talked, they touched each other a lot. They were arm in arm, or with their arms around each others’ shoulders. Some walked hand in hand. Whenever they met or said good-bye, there were displays of great affection. They were very happy and definitely not worrying about a thing.

“Just as I told you, they aren’t worried”, Ami reminded me. “I hope you will learn to be like them.”

“Why are they so happy?”

I asked this question because on Earth, people in the streets look so serious and nobody pays attention to anybody else. Here they all looked as if they were friends at a party.

“Because they’re in harmony with Life, and life produces happiness simply because of being alive - so long as we remember that. These people know it, but in your world, people forget because they have such nightmares always on their minds.”

“And they don’t have any problems?”

“They have challenges, not problems.”

“My uncle says that life only has meaning when there are problems to solve and that a person with no problems would shoot himself.”

“Your uncle was talking about problems for his intellect. This is because he has activity in only one of the two centres that I mentioned to you. Your uncle is basically ‘intellect on two legs.’ The intellect is like a computer that can’t stop functioning, at least as long as the other centre, the emotional one, is under-developed. Sometimes the intellect can’t find any problems to solve, and if at the same time the emotional centre can’t find a refreshing and healthy connection with real life, with the present moment, with ‘the here and now’, that person could go crazy and even think about shooting himself.”

I felt that he was talking about me because I’m always thinking, “What’s real life besides thinking?”

“Try leaving the mind in peace and simply sense the present moment, enjoying what you see, listening to sounds, touching, being aware of breathing, smelling, tasting, feeling, observing life with new, fresh, innocent, loving eyes. Are you happy right now?”

“I don’t know...”

“If you’d only stop thinking for a bit, you’d be more happy. Try remembering this: you’re in a spaceship, in a world light-years away from Earth; you’re contemplating an evolved planet, really civilised, inhabited by people from ancient Atlantis. That makes you a very privileged boy. How many people would love to change places with you! Instead of thinking a lot of nonsense, look around and take advantage of this moment.”

I felt that Ami was right but I still had one question and I asked it. “Then thinking isn’t good for anything?”

“A typical Earthling conclusion!” he laughed. “If it’s not the best, then it must be the worst. If it’s not white, it simply has to be black. If it’s not perfect, it’s hopeless. If it’s not God, it’s the Devil. Mental extremism!” Ami made himself more comfortable in the chair. “Of course thinking is good for some things! Without thinking, you would be like a vegetable. But thinking isn’t the greatest human achievement.

“What is it, then? To enjoy?”

“To be able to enjoy something, you must realise that you are enjoying it.”

“Then realising isn’t the same as thinking?”

“No. To realise is to be aware, to be conscious, and consciousness is more than thought.”

“Then consciousness is the best,” I concluded, already a little tired of the mess I’d got myself in because of my questions.

“Not that either,” Ami said, giving me a mysterious smile. “Here’s an example: You realise that you’ve heard a strange music recently, the first I selected?”

“Of course, but I didn’t like it.”

“You realised that you were listening a strange music, you were conscious of it, but that didn’t mean you liked it.”

“No, not really.”

“So, to enjoy something, consciousness is not enough, and realising is not enough.”

“You’re right! What’s missing, then?”

“The main thing. You enjoyed the second piece of music, right?”

“Yes, because I liked it.”

“You see? Liking is half-way to loving. Without love, there is no enjoyment. In the human achievement stakes, love comes first. Consciousness takes second place, but on its own, it isn’t sufficient to enjoy something. Thought comes in third. We, evolved people seek to love everything, to live in love. So, we enjoy ourselves more. You didn’t like the moon. I did. I enjoy myself more and I’m happier than you are.”

“Then love is tops in the Universe.”

“Now you’ve got it perfectly, Peter.”

“And do they know this on Earth?”

“Did you know it? Did they teach you that in school?”

“No.”

“Don’t you think it’s odd that you weren’t told in school about the most important thing in the Universe?”

“Now that you mention it... why isn’t anything taught about that?”

“Because down there they are only at the third stage, concerned with the intellect, ideas, reason and thought. That’s why those who think a lot are called wise, even though they work on making instruments for annihilating humankind. And why those who commit mass murder are sometimes called heroes.”

“You were right when you said that on Earth that we think back-to-front.”

“Then just observe the world of Ophir for a while. Here things are more ‘front-to-back.’”

The lack of sleep, all the day’s emotions and Ami’s new teachings had worn me out. Outside the window, I could see gigantic people, their children, the stylised buildings, and flying and earthbound vehicles but I was so tired that I was losing interest in everything.

“Do you know how old that man is?” Ami asked, pointing to a man who was near the spaceship. He had white hair but he didn’t look elderly. He looked young.

“About sixty?”

“He’s about five hundred years old...”

I felt dizzy, exhausted. My head was about to explode.

“Know what, Ami? I’m tired. I need to rest, sleep, go home. I don’t want to know anything more right now. I feel sick. I don’t want to see anything more.”

“Information overload!” Ami joked. “Come on, Peter, lie down here.”

He took me over to one of the reclining chairs, lowered it and transformed it into a soft divan. I made myself comfortable on it, he placed something behind my head and I fell asleep instantly. I let myself go and slept soundly for several hours.

Chapter 9

The Fundamental Law

I awoke fresh and rested, full of energy and feeling like new. My friend, who was adjusting some controls, winked at me.

“Feeling better now?”

“Yes. Fantastic... Heavens! My grandmother! How many hours did I sleep?”

“Fifteen seconds,” Ami replied.

“What?” I got up to look through the windows. We hadn’t moved. Neither had the people I had seen before. The man with the white hair was still there, not far from our spaceship. Nothing had changed.

“How did you do it?”

“You needed to sleep to ‘recharge your batteries.’ We have ‘battery chargers’ which in fifteen seconds can produce the same effect on you as eight hours of sleep.”

“How amazing! Then you people never lie down to sleep?”

“‘Never’ is an exaggeration. Once in a while we have to sleep because we receive something more than ‘charge’ by sleeping. But we don’t have to sleep for very long. We never focus our minds on negativity and that’s why we don’t ‘discharge’ as much as you people do.”

“Go on! The ‘evolved’ really know how to enjoy life! They live over five hundred years! They almost don’t sleep!”

“That’s the point about life, to live longer, better and happier.”

“So that man is five centuries old... Isn’t he tired of living for so long?”

“Do you want to ask him yourself? Come over here.”

We sat down in front of a screen. My friend picked up the microphone and entered some commands on the control panel keyboard.

The man’s face appeared on the screen. Ami spoke to him in a very strange language, using some sounds like varieties of “shhhh’s” which were almost inaudible. I immediately associated them with the music that had sounded like a steam train. I guessed the language Ami spoke must sound like that. The man listened to the sounds and approached the spaceship. Then he smiled at us, looking at us through the screen as though he could see us.

“Hello, Peter,” he said clearly to me.

I understood that an “interpreter” was turned on, since the movements of his lips didn’t quite match the sounds that I was hearing.

“H-hello,” I answered nervously.

“Do you know what? We’re almost related. My ancestors came from a civilisation on Earth.”

“Oh.” I couldn’t think of anything more interesting to say than that.

“That civilisation was destroyed. People weren’t very nice to each other...”

“Oh.”

“How old are you?”

“Thirt... I mean, twelve... What about you?”

“I’m some five hundred years old in Earth years.”

“And... don’t you get bored?”

”Bored? Get bored?.” He looked as if he didn’t understand.

“When the intellect looks for activity and doesn’t find it,” Ami reminded him.

“Oh, of course. I’d forgotten. No, I don’t get bored. Why should I get bored?”

“Well, after living so long, I mean.”

Just then a very beautiful young woman approached him. She greeted the man tenderly. He hugged her, caressed and kissed her several times. Smiling at each other, they talked. They seemed to love each other a lot. She left and he continued talking with me.

“Happiness is the natural state of the human being. When thought is in tune with life, with what’s natural, with the present moment, there’s no boredom but satisfaction,” he said, smiling.

It seemed to me that he was in love with that beautiful woman so I asked him, “Are you in love?”

He sighed deeply and said, “I’m totally in love.”

“With that lady who was just there with you?”

He smiled knowingly and said, “With life, with people, with the Universe, with being in existence... with love itself.”

Another woman came towards him, even more beautiful than the first. They embraced, kissed each other on the face, looked intensely into each other's eyes, talked, laughed, and then said good-bye to each other with a very long hug.

I thought that this man must be some kind of playboy from outer space...

"Have you ever been to visit the Earth?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. I've been there several times, but it's very sad."

"Why?"

"The last time I was there, armies of people were killing each other, with terrible hunger, millions of dead, cities destroyed, prison camps... It's sad."

I felt really bad, as if I were a caveman from that world, almost as though I was responsible for all that cruelty and madness.

Ami and I said good-bye to the man so we could go visit other places in the world of Ophir.

"Does that man have two wives?" I asked Ami while we were flying.

"Of course not. He only has one," he replied.

"But... he kissed both of them."

"And what's the harm in some kisses on the face and some wholesome caresses and hugs? They all love each other, but neither of those women is his wife."

"And what if his real wife should catch him?"

Ami laughed at me. "Jealousy does not exist in the evolved worlds, Peter."

I thought I understood. "Oh, I see, complete freedom. Then everyone can have a lot of partners," I said maliciously.

Ami's expression was unruffled as he replied, "No. No one wants more than one, the one that's meant to be, the beloved."

This whole thing wasn't clear to me at all. "Ami, that man said that he was in love with all people, with everything."

"So?"

"You spoke of 'the beloved' as if there were only one."

"That man was expressing his universal love, in other words, his love towards everyone and everything. But we also have personal loves, towards ourselves, our partner, parents, brothers and sisters, children, friends, cats, dogs, plants, parrots, turtles or hippopotamuses!"

“Or towards our grandmas.”

“Very true. But someone who only has personal loves doesn’t have a high evolutionary level.”

“On the other hand, someone who doesn’t love anybody in a special way but just loves everyone, would he be tops?” I asked.

“Peter, you still haven’t got it. Someone who doesn’t have special love for someone can’t love everyone, can’t experience universal love.”

“Why not?”

“Because only when you have learned to recognise, be responsible for, take care of and love your nearby trees can you love the whole forest.”

I didn’t understand so I kept quiet, preferring to contemplate the panorama on the screen. We were passing above fields where farm machines were working. Every so often, a building complex appeared similar to the one we had visited before. We also saw semi-spherical houses and pyramids scattered here and there. There were no large, unpopulated areas to be seen. I could make out roads bordered with flowers, trees and stone decorations, brooks, little bridges and waterfalls. That entire world looked like an immense Japanese-style garden.

People travelled on foot, in groups or in couples. I didn’t see any big roads, only small paths. Tiny vehicles that looked like golf carts transported some people.

“I don’t see any cars, trucks, or trains.”

“There’s no need for them. People move around by air,” Ami answered.

“Oh, so that’s why there are so many UFOs around. How can they avoid colliding?”

“We’re connected to the ‘super-cyber’ that monitors the controls of each airship.”

Ami adjusted some controls on our spaceship. “Let’s try to collide with those rocks. Don’t be afraid.”

The spaceship accelerated to a tremendous speed, hurling itself towards the rocks. But before we could collide with them, we swerved and continued flying horizontally a couple of metres off the ground. Ami hadn’t touched the controls!

“Collisions are impossible. The ‘cyber’ doesn’t allow them.”

“Incredible!” I exclaimed with relief.

A bit later, I wanted to find out which country in that world was the most important.

“Ami, how many countries are there in Ophir?”

“None. Ophir is an evolved world.”

“There aren’t any countries?”

“Of course not, or you could say, just the one, Ophir!”

“And who’s the President?”

“There is no President.”

“Who is the ruler, then?”

“Ruler... ruler? No, no one’s the ruler.”

“But who organises everything?”

“That’s something else entirely. Everything’s already organised here, but when something unexpected happens, those who are the most qualified meet with the specialists in that field and make decisions. Everything is planned and the machines do almost all the heavy work.”

“What do people do, then?”

“Live, work, study, grow up as persons, enjoy, serve. Besides that, we devote part of our time towards helping people from non-evolved worlds - but always within the limits of the ‘aid plan,’ of course. I’ve already told you something about what we do, but sometimes we also lend a hand in the birth of religions that lead towards love.”

“How does that work?”

“What do you think that ‘manna’ was that your Bible says fell from the sky in the desert during the time of Moses?”

“You?”

“Us.”

“Go on! I thought that God...”

“Well... solidarity inspired us, and solidarity is love, and what you call God is Love, so it’s almost the same thing, as you’ll soon see. But we also do other things to help you folks. Our scientists collaborate in biological, geological and other types of projects without you know it; and sometimes they intervene behind the scenes to assist your scientists make some important discovery. We also help in the rescue of the more evolved people if a civilisation is in danger of destruction. That’s why we’re constantly watching you”. Ami sighed, looked serious and continued.

“We can’t ignore the scientific discoveries made in any non-evolved world. I already told you that certain energy in the wrong hands can alter the balance of the galaxy, and that includes our own worlds. Everything has repercussions on everything else and for that reason, we work with you to help you improve yourselves. We do this for the benefit of you folks, for ourselves and for the rest of the Universe, for the common good”.

“I don’t see wire fences anywhere. How do people know who owns each piece of property?”

“Here, everything belongs to everyone.”

I thought about that for a long time. It seemed to me that that would be like a beehive, an anthill or a military barracks.

“Then no one is permitted to make progress?”

“I don’t think I understand your question, Peter.”

“Progress. You know, getting ahead.”

“Are you talking about attaining a greater level of evolution, more measures? There are spiritual exercises for that.”

“I’m not talking about evolution or measures, Ami.”

“What are you talking about, then?”

“Having more than other people.”

“Having more what, Peter?”

“Well, like more money, more wealth.”

“Money doesn’t exist here.”

“No? Then how do people buy things?”

“They don’t buy anything. If someone needs something, he or she asks the society for what they need and the society gives it to them.”

“Whatever they want?”

“Whatever they need,” said Ami.

“Anything?” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing.

“If someone needs something and it’s available, why not?”

“Even those golf cart vehicles we saw?”

“Or an airship.” Ami was talking as if he were telling me the most natural thing in the world.

“Everyone can have a spaceship?”

“Everyone can use a spaceship.”

“This spaceship is yours.”

“No, but I’m using it. And so are you.”

“What if you wanted it to be yours.”

“Well, let’s see. ‘Yours’ indicates possession, ownership, and I’ve already told you that everything belongs to everybody, to whoever needs it for a while, just like a park bench on your planet.”

“What if I were to take a spaceship like this one and I wanted to leave it in my backyard when I wasn’t using it? Could I do that?”

“How long would you go without using it?”

“Let’s say... three days, or a week” I replied.

“Then it would be better if you left it in a place designated for parking these spaceships, the ‘spaceport.’ Then someone else could use it while you’re not. Later, when you return, you could take that one or any other one that’s available.”

“But what if I wanted only that one?”

“And why would you want only that one? They’re all more or less the same.”

“Just suppose that I feel affection for it, like with you and your ‘out-of-date’ television.”

“That ‘television,’ as you call it, is a little souvenir. No one needs it because it’s outdated. When I don’t want to keep it anymore, I’ll hand it in so that those who work with these kinds of instruments can decide if it’s worth modifying or to be scrapped. Or I can keep it all my life. It’s not something that’s useful to the public. But if you wanted to keep that same spaceship, that would be a very strange whim because you didn’t build it, and besides, there are plenty of spaceships. Anyhow, if you insisted on always using the same spaceship, you’d have to wait for it to arrive if it was already in use.”

“But what if I wanted always to use that same spaceship”, I persisted, “what if I wanted it to be for me and no one else?”

“Why wouldn’t you want anyone else to use it?” asked Ami.

“Let’s suppose that I don’t like other people using the things I use.”

“That would be unhealthy, to feel such possessiveness, selfishness.”

“It’s not selfishness!”

“What is it, then? Generosity? Solidarity? The spirit of cooperation?” Ami started laughing.

“So I have to share my toothbrush with everybody?”

“Mental extremism again! You don’t have to share either your toothbrush or your other personal items. There are millions of them here, there’s plenty of everything here. That’s why no one is enslaved to material things. But not to want to share a spaceship! Besides, in the ‘spaceport’ it’s overhauled by the machines in charge of doing that. It’s repaired and cleaned when necessary. Then you don’t have to do that yourself.”

“Sure, but...”

“It’s normal to want to protect oneself in a hostile world, a world without solidarity where everyone must save themselves as best they can. There, money and material possessions can protect you. But in a world where society guarantees the availability of all you will ever need during your lifetime, what’s the logic of wanting to accumulate things? There’s no need to, Peter!”

“That sounds good, but I imagine that it’s like going to boarding school: everything compulsory; everyone being watched.”

“You’re wrong. Here, everyone enjoys the fullest, most complete liberty.”

“Ami, surely there are rules and laws?”

“Yes, I told you before that there are, but all of them are based upon the fundamental law of the Universe, for the benefit and protection of all the people.”

“Are you going to tell me about that blessed law now?”

“Later. Be patient,” Ami smiled.

“What if I violate some rule?”

“You’d suffer.”

“Would I be punished, put in jail?”

“No. Punishment and jails don’t exist here. But if you do something wrong, you suffer. You punish yourself.”

“Myself? I don’t understand, Ami.”

“Would you slap your grandmother?”

“No! Of course not! What a thing to say!”

“Imagine that you had slapped her. What would happen to you?”

“I would feel terrible. I’d feel really sorry. I couldn’t stand it! Poor grandma, she doesn’t deserve such a thing!”

“That’s what punishing yourself is! You don’t need other people to punish you or put you in jail. There are things that no one does but not because they’re against the law. You wouldn’t hurt your grandmother. You certainly wouldn’t want to physically

injure her. You wouldn't even want to take her personal possessions away from her. On the contrary, you try to help her and protect her."

"Yes, because I love her."

"Well, here we all love one another; we're all brothers and sisters."

There are times when understanding something produces a flash of light in the mind! Ami's explanations had finally got through to me and I could suddenly see what he had been trying to tell me. That world was not like mine. It wasn't a place of competition, fear and distrust of others and rivalry. No, it wasn't like that. Humanity in that world was one big family in which everyone loved each other, so they simply shared everything, always wishing happiness for each and every one. Now it seemed very obvious to me.

"All the evolved worlds in the Universe are organised like this," Ami explained, happy that I had grasped the idea.

"Then, the love of everyone for each other is the basis of the whole thing?"

"Yes, Peter. That's the fundamental law of the Universe."

"What? Which one?"

"Love," said Ami.

"I thought that it would be something more complicated."

"It's easy, simple and natural. Nevertheless, for some people it's not easy to grasp. That's the point of evolution. Evolution means growing in love."

That phrase produced another flash of light for me.

"'Evolution means growing in love.' Of course!" I exclaimed.

"Beings who are more evolved need, experience and express more love. The greatness or smallness of a person is determined only by the measure of his or her love"

"Why is it so hard for us to love?"

"It's hard when we have a barrier inside ourselves that blocks our best feelings."

"What barrier?"

"The ego."

"The ego?"

"Yes, the ego. The ego isn't the 'true me', the real self, but it certainly thinks it is! The bigger a person's ego, the more it needs to believe it's number one! The ego enables us to feel bigger or more important than others. It makes us arrogant, proud and cruel; it makes us believe that we are justified in dominating, and using other

people, even having other people serve us like slaves. It is a very non-evolved way of living! And since the ego is a barrier to love, it actually gets in the way of our experiencing solidarity, feeling compassion, tenderness, affection or fondness. An out-of-control ego cuts us off from the life around us. Mark my words, egoists are interested only in themselves.”

“You’re right!”

“One stage further and you get egotists, who consider themselves the only important thing in the world. Last of all, you have egocentrics, who think that the whole Universe revolves around them!”

Ami went on, “Human evolution consists in overcoming the ego so that love and wisdom can grow”.

“Then, what you’re saying is that we Earthlings have a lot of ego?”

“That depends upon each person’s evolutionary level. The greater the evolution, the less ego and the more solidarity. Let’s continue our travels, Peter.”

Chapter 10

Interplanetary Fellowship

A small, attractive stadium stood in a hollow of a meadow. There were many very strange beings giving a performance for the public. At first, I thought that the people must be wearing disguises, but soon I understood that wasn't the case. There were some beings who were gigantic, even bigger than the people of Ophir; others were shorter, almost dwarves. Some of them looked very similar to us but others were very different. They had beautiful, strange expressions; large eyes, tiny mouths and noses that were sometimes mere dimples and faces that were olive coloured, rosy, black, dead white, yellow, and so on.

"I suppose that all these beings come from other worlds."

"What a brilliant deduction! How did you figure that out?" Ami joked. "Each group is demonstrating dances from their planets," he added.

There were five performers from each world. Holding hands and making a big circle, they danced to the sound of a pleasant melody. Inside this circle there was another one, smaller, formed by a group of different beings; all of them were playing with a golden balloon which was gently ascending and descending. The spectators applauded very enthusiastically and respectfully.

Besides the Ophirians, there were also spectators from other worlds. Flags decorated the sides of the stadium and many spaceships of various types were parked outside, in a site that had been set aside for them. Others, like ours, remained suspended in the air.

"Who's winning?" I asked.

"Who's winning what?"

"We are in a stadium; it looks like a competition to me. Isn't it?"

"Competition?"

"Aren't they looking for the group that does it the best?"

"No."

"Then what is this all about?"

"The purpose is to show what they feel, to present a beautiful performance, to expand the ties of friendship, to demonstrate, to enjoy themselves and to have a nice time together."

"What about the group that does it better than all the rest? Doesn't it win some sort of prize?"

“No one’s comparing anything. They’re teaching, learning and having a good time.”

“On Earth the best are given prizes.”

“And with that system, those who come in last are humiliated and the winners’ egos just get bigger,” Ami said, smiling.

“You have to be tough if you want to win.”

“Peter, you’re talking again about trying to be better than others. Competition, selfishness and division.”

“Is competition always so bad?”

“The only competition should be with oneself, simply to improve oneself. Competitions among brothers and sisters could not exist in evolved worlds since competition carries the seeds of division, war and destruction.”

I thought Ami had to be exaggerating. It seemed to me that competitions could simply be healthy sporting activities. But Ami had read my mind.

“Not that healthy. They are based on caveman mentality, with a lot of money thrown in. Wars have started over a soccer game. People sometimes even kill each other in stadiums on Earth. What you’re seeing here is really healthy; it’s sporting, educative, amusing and artistic.”

“It looks like a kids’ game on my planet, where children play circle games.”

“Such ‘games’ can be performed by all kinds of people, Peter. They represent unity, fellowship and solidarity, which is very similar to the meaning of the symbol on my chest, the winged heart.”

“What does it mean?”

“It represents unconditional love; a winged love that goes beyond all attachments and borders.”

We continued watching the performance while Ami explained what was going on. “Each movement that they make has a meaning. It forms part of a language.”

“How pretty! I’d like my grandma to see this... By the way, what time is it on Earth?”

“Your grandma has four hours of ‘insomnia’ left.”

“Can we see her from here, too?”

“Of course. We can do it by means of the network of ‘satellites’ I told you about before. Wait.”

He adjusted the controls on a screen and my planet appeared, seen from a great height. Then the image zoomed in and we could see my grandma sleeping.

“How marvellous!

“What’s more,” Ami continued, “we can tune into the past of any world.”

“The past! How can you do that?”

“Everything that any person has done at any given moment is ‘recorded’ for ever and we can play it back.”

I swallowed hard.

“Everything?”

“Absolutely everything!”

“Heavens!”

“Look at that golden balloon that’s floating down there. We can see it because light rays from the sun bounce off it and reach your eyes. But other rays bounce off into space. They travel through space eternally. If we were to capture that light at a distance, we would be seeing the balloon as it was in the past.”

“How incredible!”

“Later, I can show you Napoleon, Julius Caesar, Jesus, Lincoln, Buddha, Plato, Mohammed, Moses... in action!”

“Really?”

“Really. And even yourself a few years ago.”

I remembered some bad things I’d done that I’d rather forget.

“Well, that’s not really necessary, Ami.”

He laughed at me. “Childish pranks aren’t evil, Peter. Nor is curiosity. Don’t blame yourself for things that are only normal. So don’t worry, just pay attention to this world. I want you to know a little more about Ophir.”

We began to ascend behind the stadium. A shining spaceship passed very close to us, signalling us with its lights. Our spaceship did the same, while Ami smiled mischievously.

“Who’s that? A friend of yours?”

“Those were some happy, amusing people who came from a world I visited a long time ago.”

“What do those signals with the lights mean?”

“A greeting, friendship. They were nice to us and we were nice to them.”

“How do you know that?”

“Didn’t you feel it?”

“I don’t think so.”

“That’s because you’re not observing yourself. Didn’t you feel a certain joy when that spaceship approached us?”

“I don’t know, I don’t think so. I was thinking that we might collide!”

“Mr. Paranoia was worried, as usual,” laughed Ami. “Look at that spaceship there. It’s from my world. See how it’s identical to this one?”

“Yes I do. I’d like to visit your planet!”

“I’ll take you there on some other trip. Today we don’t have time.”

“Promise?”

“If you write the book, I promise.”

“And can we travel to the beaches of Sirius?”

“There, too,” laughed my space friend. “You have a good memory. And also to the planet that we’re preparing as a shelter for those we’ll rescue in case a big catastrophe takes place on Earth.”

“Do you mean that destruction is inevitable?”

“No, but that depends upon what you folks do about beginning to live in a humane way, without violence, without injustice and without weapons.”

“And we should form one single society on Earth, like Ophir, right?”

“In time, that would be the ideal. Loving your own people is very good, but thinking about yourselves as nations is short-sighted - it doesn’t leave room to love the rest of the world. Think about the Universe and how large it is; it gives shelter to many forms of life and intelligence, and everything was born out of the same energy of love. That’s why we must think and love ‘on a big scale’”

“You’re right. We should live without borders. Let the atmosphere be Earth’s only border!” I exclaimed enthusiastically.

“Not even that. The Universe is free, it is open and there are no owners. We don’t need to ask anyone’s permission to come to this world or to any other one that we want to visit.”

“Do you mean that any of you can come to this world without asking for a visa or any authorization?”

“And go to any other place in the Universe,” confirmed Ami.

“And the people here don’t get mad?”

“Why should it bother them? We are all friends, and you don’t fear your friends.” Ami seemed delighted by our dialogue.

“I don’t know. It’s hard for me to accept so many wonderful ideas.”

“I’ll try to explain it to you, Peter. The evolved worlds form a universal fellowship. We’re all friends, like brothers and sisters, although we may have very different appearances. We’re free to come and go. There are no secrets among us; on the contrary, we share all our knowledge. There are no wars between the galaxies. There’s no competition among us but only cooperation; no violence but peace and friendship. None of us wants to have power over anyone else, we just like to be ourselves, to improve ourselves day by day and enjoy life wholesomely. But since we value all beings, wherever they may be, we also like helping and working with everyone who may need us. We have a clear conscience; we all uphold the unity of love and feel enormous gratitude to be sharing in it.

It seemed to me that Ami’s way of thinking and how I usually thought about things were light years apart.

“You people are real saints. We aren’t.”

“Not at all, Peter! It’s just that once you learn to live by the spirit of solidarity, for the common good, life turns out to be very simple. If humanity on Earth is successful in overcoming its selfishness and distrust, we can then reveal ourselves to the human race and help you become part of the cosmic fellowship. Then you will be ready to receive wonderful scientific and spiritual knowledge, which will make life as marvellous for you as it is for us, and everyone will begin to achieve happiness.”

“What you’re saying is really beautiful, Ami.”

“Because it’s the truth, and the more beautiful the truth, the more of the truth you discover. When you return to your world, write that book, so that it will be one more voice, another grain of sand. Grain by grain, your world will change.”

“When they read it, people will put aside their weapons to live in peace!” I said, now thoroughly convinced.

Ami began to laugh at me again, patting me on the head, but this time it didn’t bother me because I didn’t consider him a kid like me any longer but someone wiser than me, and older than me, never mind how young he looked.

“It won’t be that easy, Peter. People on Earth are living as if they are surrounded by enemies; they’re asleep, dreaming ugly nightmares and believing all kinds of lies and hallucinations. They don’t yet see that humankind need not be its own worst enemy but the very means by which the most beautiful dreams can become real.

“That’s very nice, Ami.”

“Again, that’s because the great truths of the Universe are beautiful. Do you think a garden full of flowers is ugly?”

“No, on the contrary; it’s beautiful,” I replied.

“But if those who lead armies into battle tried to create such flowers, they’d put bullets in place of the petals, and make the stems out of inhumane, rigid laws.”

“Then... they won’t believe in my book?”

“Peter, you need to be prepared. There are people who think that only horrible things are true. They think what is dark is light and what is light is dark. They will not be interested in your book, and they won’t think much of you either! But many others are able to look at life and the Universe in a positive and healthy way. Kind and well-meaning people will believe you, for they know intuitively that the great truths are beautiful and peaceful. They will contribute to spreading the message that you are going to help bring. It’s all part of a process. We play our part by offering help and for your part, you will have to make the effort to improve yourselves; believe me, every single time someone makes progress, the world makes progress too.”

“Very well, Ami, I understand. May I know now if have seven hundred measures?”

“I already told you that those who do something for the good of all have a good level. And those who have the ability to do something but don’t bother, they are lacking love and won’t have a good level.”

“Then as soon as I get home, I’m going to get started writing,” I said, a bit alarmed.

Ami laughed!

Chapter 11

Underwater

We approached an immense sky-blue lake. Yachts and motorboats skimmed over the surface; on the banks people were having a good time playing in the water and on the beach. I really felt like diving into that refreshing crystalline world.

“But you can’t do that, Peter.”

“Because of my germs?”

“Correct.”

There was a dock where people were helping themselves to any kind of boat - luxurious yachts, little rowing boats, pedal craft, sailing dinghies and motorboats. There were also floating transparent spheres of various sizes, and all sorts of marine bicycles and jet skis. Some boats were towing people waterskiing or hanging airborne from big kites or parachutes.

“Then anyone can take anything here... freely?”

“Of course.”

“I expect most people choose luxury yachts.”

“You’re wrong. Many people like to row. Others like to go out in a little boat to experience the sensation of being close to the water, as well as for physical exercise.”

Some people were taking diving equipment and jumping into the water.

“What are they doing?” I asked. “Underwater fishing?”

My question surprised Ami; then he seemed to understand. “‘Fishing’... you mean, chasing and trying to kill another living creature? No, here no one does anything like that. Love reigns here, Peter.”

“Of course. I should have thought of that. Then what are they doing under the water?”

“Exploring, moving around and enjoying life. Do you want to go to the bottom of the lake too?”

“But you said that I couldn’t leave the spaceship.”

Ami didn’t say anything as we set off for the lake, but gave me a wink.

We submerged. It was very beautiful gazing at that underwater world. Many people and vehicles were in motion below the surface of the water. Most people were using those transparent spheres.

A boy wearing diving goggles, flippers on his feet, and a little oxygen tank passed near us. When he saw us, he swam over to our spaceship and pressed his nose against the glass of one of the windows, making a funny face.

Ami laughed. I thought how if I'd been diving off a beach in my world, I wouldn't have had the confidence to approach an underwater UFO. Evidently, these people weren't anything like us; they didn't live their lives in fear of the unknown.

At the bottom of lake appeared an enormous transparent cupola with multi-coloured lights. There was a sort of restaurant inside that big bubble. I could see tables, an orchestra, singers and a dance floor where some people were dancing to the beat of a cheerful song. Others clapped their hands while they watched from their tables, which were covered with various dishes of food and drinks.

"You don't have to pay there either?" I asked

"Here you don't have to pay anywhere, Peter."

"This is better than going to Heaven!"

"Well, we are 'up in the sky', aren't we?"

Little by little it was becoming clear to me how wonderful it must be to live in a world like that.

"You have to earn this privilege." said Ami.

Slowly we continued moving forward along the bottom of that lake, which was full of strange fish and plants. Some pyramids appeared, towering over the algae and coral.

"What's that? Is it sunken Atlantis?" I asked, astonished.

"They're underwater life investigation centres, Peter."

"Are there any sharks around here?"

"No sharks, snakes, spiders or wild animals! Nothing aggressive or poisonous. This is an evolved planet; that's why it no longer has crude species. They only appear in non-evolved worlds."

"What do your 'so-evolved' fish eat?" I asked.

"The same as cows and horses on your planet; they are natural vegetarians. On worlds like this one, no beings kill animals in order to live. And no animal eats another one."

"So that's why you don't eat meat!"

Ami was laughing. "Of course we don't eat corpses... How disgusting! And how cruel it is to kill those innocent little chicken, pigs and cows. Don't you think so?"

When I heard him say this, it suddenly seemed cruel to me, too. I decided to stop eating meat.

“Speaking of food...” I said, since my stomach was feeling rather empty.

“Are you hungry?”

“Very. Is there any tasty extraterrestrial food around here?”

“Of course. Look for it back there.” Ami pointed to a cupboard behind the chairs we were sitting in. I opened it and discovered a small pantry full of jars marked with strange symbols. They were made of a material that looked like laminated wood.

“Take the widest one.”

I didn’t know how to open it. It seemed to be hermetically sealed.

Ami laughed at my confusion. “Press the blue spot,” he said, and as I did so, the top opened easily, revealing some amber-coloured, almost transparent fruit that looked like walnuts.

“What are those things?”

“Eat one.”

I picked one up. It was soft, like a sponge. I tested it with the tip of my tongue. It had a sweet taste.

“Go on, eat it. It’s not poison.” Ami was watching what I was doing. “Pass me one too.”

I offered him the jar. He took one of the fruits, popped it in his mouth and ate it with obvious delight. I bit into mine a little and tasted it carefully. It tasted like peanuts, walnuts or hazelnuts. The flavour was very delicate. I found I really liked it. I was getting more confident. The second mouthful seemed exquisite.

“They’re delicious!”

“Don’t eat more than four or five of them. They have too much protein.”

“What are they?”

“It’s a kind of honey,” laughed Ami, “from something sort of like bees.” Now he was laughing more loudly.

“I like them. Can I take some home to my grandma?”

“Of course. But leave the rest here. And only give them to your grandma. Don’t show them to anyone else. Just the two of you eat them all and don’t keep any of them. Promise?”

“I promise. Mmm... They’re delicious.”

“Not as delicious as some Earth fruit that I really like,” said Ami.

“Which fruit is that?”

“What you call apricots.”

“You like them?”

“Of course. They’re much appreciated on my planet. We’ve tried to adapt them to our soil but we still haven’t been able to duplicate that very special flavour. UFOs frequently visit apricot orchards.” Ami’s laughter sounded like a baby’s.

“You... steal them?” I asked, very surprised.

“Steal? What does that mean?” Ami pretended not to know.

“Take something that belongs to someone else.”

“Oh, your attachment to material things! ‘Belongs to’. All right, then, we can’t avoid the ‘bad habits’ of our worlds”. Ami was laughing again. “Yes, we ‘steal’ five or ten apricots.”

I thought he was funny but I still didn’t like something about this. Stealing is stealing, whether it’s a piece of fruit or a million dollars. I told him that.

“Why on Earth don’t you let someone who needs something just take it, without paying?” Ami asked me mischievously, because he knew very well how absurd his question was going to be for me to answer.

“Are you crazy? No one would bother to work if they weren’t going to be paid anything.”

“Then you people have no solidarity. Just selfishness. It seems you won’t offer something unless you’re going to get something back.” He continued laughing at me, but he had a humorous way of doing it that didn’t make me feel he was criticising me.

I imagined myself owning a big apricot orchard with people coming and taking my fruit without paying anything. Next thing I see, along comes some “wise guy” who loads up all my fruit in his truck. I try to stop him but he just drives off, making fun of me and saying, “Why should it bother you that I’m carting off all the fruit? Where’s your solidarity? You’re just selfish. You don’t like sharing. Ha, ha, ha.”

Ami could ‘see’ my mental “movie” and said, “Hey, what distrust! Remember that in an evolved society no one ‘takes advantage’ of anyone. Whatever would that poor man do with his truckload of fruit?”

“Sell the fruit, of course”.

“Nothing is sold. There’s no money here.”

I laughed at my own stupidity. I'd forgotten that money doesn't exist in an evolved world. Of course. Why would he want so much fruit?

"Fine. But why should I work for nothing?"

"If there's solidarity in you, you're going to be happy to cooperate with others. And that way you'll have the right to receive cooperation from others. You could go to your neighbour's and take what you need from his orchard. From the dairy you could take milk; from the bakery, bread, and so on. But you don't have to do all this on your own. An evolved society is very well organised and spares you the bother."

"How is it done then?"

"In an evolved world, nothing is wasted, and everything is organised through something like the Internet. Orders are taken according to the real needs of the people. Every order is registered because everyone has their code. Then the products are immediately delivered to your home, not by people but by machines."

"Don't tell me that all those marvels happen here!"

"All those and many others too."

"Then there's no need to work here!"

"There is always something to do: supervise the machines, create new and better ones, help those who need us, investigate life and the Universe, improve our world and ourselves, and also enjoy our free time."

"But there's always someone who wants to take advantage of the situation like 'the wise guy,'" I argued, remembering the man with the truck.

"That person you call a 'wise guy' has a low level of evolution, a lot of selfishness and very little solidarity. He thinks he's smart, shrewd, intelligent, but actually he's very stupid; with that level he can't enter the evolved worlds. In evolved worlds it's considered a privilege to work more, to be able to help more. People are working or studying in many places, in factories, laboratories, research centres and universities, in some of those pyramids, for instance. Some are on service missions in non-evolved planets, others are studying in more advanced worlds so they can return and teach here. Life is meant to be happy, to be enjoyed, but the greatest happiness is obtained by helping others."

"Then these people we are looking at, who are here, just having fun... are lazy?"

Ami's laugh told me that once again I was wrong.

"No, that's not it. Even though our work is very useful, we have to rest from time to time. We have to go out in the fresh air to play, to exercise our bodies, to rest our brains and to think about other things, just like school holidays."

"So how many hours a day do people work here?"

“Each person determines his or her own study and work schedule, depending upon what he or she feels is best.”

That made my jaw drop in surprise. “But, that’s wonderful!”

“Yes, it is, but no one here wants to waste time. We enjoy ourselves in places like this only for as long as necessary, because we find it even more enjoyable to dedicate ourselves to our studies or our jobs that we freely choose. That’s why we can sometimes work round the clock, as I’m doing right now.”

“You... working? What work are you doing? It looks to me like we’re only taking a stroll.”

Listening to me made Ami laugh. “I’m something between a teacher and a messenger.”

Just then, I saw two divers forcing open the window of an underwater pyramid, intending to go in and steal.

Ami knew what I was thinking and smiled. “They’re cleaning the windows! You always have crime on your mind!”

Once again, I saw clearly that I was thinking like a cave dweller in that advanced world. But I couldn’t help myself.

“So what are the police like here?”

“Police? What for?”

“To take care of things, prevent people from...”

“From what?”

“Aren’t there ever any bad people here?”

“Well, no one is perfect, but with seven hundred measures, with knowledge and motivation, and with the right social organisation, everyone stops harming his or her fellow being. No one needs to be ‘bad,’ and that’s why there’s no need for police.”

“That’s incredible!”

“What is incredible is what’s happening on Earth, where people kill each other and make each other suffer and don’t live together like brothers and sisters. Too many egos, a lack of mercy and solidarity, not to mention a sad lack of the most elementary logic.”

“You’re right, Ami. You know, it seems impossible to me that someday we’ll be living on Earth the way you guys live. We’re bad, we lack love. Me, too. There are people I don’t like.”

I was thinking about a classmate of mine who’s always serious. Whenever you’re playing or feeling enthusiastic about something, just one look from this guy and all

the fun goes right out the window. I also thought about another kid in my class who is a religious fanatic. He thinks he's a saint. He says that the angels appear to him and that he'll go to Heaven while the rest of us will go to Hell; he's always condemning us because we're up to mischief or playing jokes. No, I definitely don't like him!

"I don't find all the people in my world, or in any world, always nice either," admitted Ami.

"Really? Then you have faults?" I was getting enthusiastic. "I thought you were perfect."

"But just because someone doesn't seem so nice doesn't mean that I'm going to stop feeling affection for that person. Or that I could harm him or her in any way." he explained, looking at me with a smile.

"I wouldn't do anything to harm either of those wet blankets either, but don't ask me to live with either one of them."

"We must try to love everybody, though it's not so easy; but at present that can't be expected of you Earth people."

"Then we Earthlings don't have to be perfect?"

Now my little space friend was really laughing at me. He continued:

"In non-evolved worlds, the majority of the people don't do any positive thing for humanity while being only too ready to find fault in others. But some do want to improve themselves. Now to become evolved one must pass through many lifetimes and live through many challenges and experiences. A problem can arise when people don't understand this and think everything must be achieved in one short earthly life. That can destroy their desire to improve themselves, just like someone telling you to swim the English Channel when the most you had managed so far was one length of the swimming pool!"

"Ooof! I'd be tired before even I got started."

"Of course. That's why it doesn't help to set such impossible goals. It's better to think about improving ourselves little by little, as far as we're capable. "

"I hadn't thought of that, Ami. So, if we go on improving for long enough, do we get to meet God?"

"It's very simple, Peter. What you call God is love."

"So?"

"Whoever experiences love, experiences God. When the intellect shines with love, when love combines with knowledge, then comes wisdom. But without love, knowledge is only knowledge. That's why people who never find love make so many mistakes, poor things."

"Why do you call them 'poor things'?"

“From pity, of course. Remember that all the harm we do returns to us and causes pain. Those poor things suffer greatly.”

I looked at Ami respectfully. To me he was a true saint, even though he’d said he wasn’t. I began to see that on Earth, the Universe gives back to us what we deserve and that’s why there’s so little happiness in our world.

“Most people on Earth are not aware of that and this is another reason for not openly showing ourselves to you, or telling you about wonders that you are missing out on. We hold back out of compassion.”

This was another huge blow to my planetary ego, because nothing is more painful than to deserve compassion!

“I’m sorry, Peter, but it’s time for people to start opening their eyes to reality and do something for the improvement of Earth. Because the way you are now, very soon...”

“I know. Boom!”

“That’s right. You can see that even religion is being used to foster hate, to make war, to divide instead of unite, the opposite of what it should be. Take the word ‘religion’ - it comes from the Latin language, re-ligare, which means linking together, uniting.”

“And in my world we all live divided...”

“But I’m not dis-united, Peter, because my heart is filled with love, and when it’s not, I try with all my strength to make it so.”

The way he said this was so beautiful and pleasing that it made me feel love, too.

“You’re right, Ami. I can well believe that the fundamental love of the Universe is the Law.”

“The fundamental law of the Universe, Peter, is Love”, Ami corrected me. “What’s more, it is not a belief but a universal principle, proven scientifically and spiritually. I say this because science and spirituality are the same for us. They’ll be the same for you people, too, when earthly science discovers the tremendous power of love.”

“I thought that that was a...”

“A superstition?” Ami asked, laughing.

“Something like that.”

“Is what you’re feeling in your chest this moment a superstition?”

I paid attention to the agreeable sensations within me and then I understood that love wasn’t something imaginary but a very real, perceptible and physical energy.

“Oh... to think I thought love was only a kind of good intention and nothing else.”

“You were wrong. Love is energy, and that energy is what people need most of all, and in families, and communities, around your whole world, and in all worlds.”

Chapter 12

New Times

We emerged from the water and rapidly headed back to dry land. In a few minutes, we came to some buildings. We stopped mid-air and what I saw almost made me faint. I could see a number of people flying!

Some were vertical and others horizontal, suspended high in the air with their arms spread open. All of them had their eyes closed and their faces radiated great pleasure, sweetness and concentration. They glided in immense circles like eagles. Ami turned on the 'senso-meter' and focused on one of them.

"Let's see what his level of evolution is."

The man looked very transparent. The light from his chest was radiant, exceeding the limits of his body and sending out a sphere of light that surrounded him and extended far beyond him.

"They are experiencing the most powerful force of the Universe, the force of love," Ami explained.

"How do they do that?" I asked, fascinated.

"Love elevates them."

"Oh."

"It's something like what we did on the beach, but they're real experts."

"They must have an incredible number of measures."

"These people have around one thousand measures, but while they're concentrating, they're able to exceed two thousand. These are spiritual exercises being practised. When they finish the exercises, they return to their usual level."

"This must be the most advanced world in the whole Universe!" I exclaimed.

Ami laughed at me. "You're wrong. This level of civilisation is fairly common. There are planets inhabited by beings who have around one thousand five hundred measures. And still others where beings have two thousand, three thousand, four thousand. But for the present, you and I can't go to the other worlds that are even more elevated. They're inhabited by beings who exceed ten thousand measures, the solar beings. They're almost pure love."

"Solar beings?"

"Of course. The inhabitants of stars."

“I never would have imagined that.”

“Naturally. No one can look higher than one step beyond the one on which they’re standing.”

“And these solar beings don’t get burned?”

Ami smiled. “No, they don’t get burned. Their bodies are composed of radiant energy, not solid material. Let’s go see that group that’s over there.”

In the distance, about fifty people were sitting in a circle on the meadow. At first glance, they appeared to shine, like those who were flying. Sitting with their legs crossed and their backs straight, they were meditating or praying.

“What are they doing?”

“They’re sending something like telepathic messages to less evolved worlds in the galaxy. But these messages don’t depend on the mind alone. You also have to use the emotional centre.”

“What do the messages say?”

“Calm down, Peter, and maybe you’ll be able to receive them, for we’re very close to the source of transmission. No, not like that - relax your body, close your eyes and stay alert.”

I did what Ami said. At first, I didn’t feel anything, except a deep emotion that I’d been feeling since we approached the place. But soon I began to experience “thought-feelings.”

A sort of inner clarity came over me. Then my mind gave words to those sensations. It was something very strange and beautiful, like a poem arising:

*“All that is not sustained by Love
will be destroyed,
in time forgotten,
cast aside...
but all that which in Love is sustained,
whether friendship,
partner,
family,
group,
government,
nation,
individual soul
or humanity

will be firm and secure,
will prosper and be fruitful,
and shall not know destruction...”*

I could almost “see” the Being who was saying that. It seemed to me that it was not those persons who were talking; for me, at least, it was like hearing God speak.

*“That is my Pact,
my Promise and my Law.”*

“Did you pick it up, Peter?” Ami asked me.

I opened my eyes. “Oh, yes. What does all this mean?”

“These messages come from the source of all that is most sacred, that which you call God. Our friends you can see here receive them and re-transmit them to less evolved worlds like yours. There, other sensitive persons can pick them up and those messages can be used to help create a new world.”

“A new world... When I recollect how things are on Earth I don’t think it will be easy to achieve that any time soon, Ami.”

“You’re right, but don’t see it as so very difficult, Peter. Times are changing rapidly. Conditions are arising to bring about an evolutionary leap on your planet.”

“What are you saying, Ami?” I asked, very interested.

“I’m talking about something that can put an end to millennia of barbarity and pain, something that can help your world enter a new age, one where love reigns...”

“Is something so wonderful really possible, Ami?”

“Yes, because your planet is evolving. It’s beginning to generate more subtle energy, vibrations that are more elevated, a luminous radiation that benefits the growth of love in all beings. This began some time ago and is already producing great changes in millions of people. A little more and you folks will be ready to make that evolutionary leap and live as people do here on Ophir. But for now it’s not possible.”

“Why not, Ami?”

“Because your people continue to be influenced by old ideas that are not appropriate for the new times. This makes people suffer - like wearing shoes that are too tight. But beings were not born to suffer, they were born to be happy, Peter. That’s why they seek a better world, whether consciously or instinctively. Haven’t you noticed that lately people are talking more about love?”

“Yes, Ami, that’s true, even if it’s not practised very much.”

“Not by everybody; but each day more and more people are trying to elevate their level and live with more solidarity and joy. This can be extended...”

I remembered the joy and happiness of the people on Ophir and I compared it with the seriousness and sadness of the poor people of my planet.

“In spite of what you say, I don’t believe that people on Earth are any happier than before.”

“Some are, others are not. Previously more people believed more in war, in the law of the strongest. They lived in constant danger of death, accepting it because they believed it was all you could expect from life. Now, today, the majority of the people hope for more. They wish only to live in peace. There’s a new generation of human beings arriving, the product of finer radiations, due to planetary evolution.”

“I guess I belong to that generation...”

“Positive change is going on day by day. Have faith and hope, Peter. The Universe is a powerful ally of love these days.”

We left that place, rapidly gaining altitude. Even though we were now flying away from Orphir at tremendous speed, we remained immersed in the beautiful vibration of that world.

“How many hours have we been in this spaceship, Ami?” I asked, changing the subject.

“About six.”

“How strange! I feel as though we had been here much longer. It seems such a long time since I got into the spaceship on the beach.”

“I told you that time streeetches... Let’s go to the ‘movies.’ Look down there.”

We had travelled to the nocturnal side of the planet, but everything was illuminated by many artificial light sources in the buildings and surrounding meadows. I could see something like an outdoor movie theatre with many spectators. The screen was a crystal plate and on it you could see a play of coloured images, forms and shapes moving to the beat of gentle music.

In front of the screen, there was a special seat, one that stood out from the rest. There sat a woman with something on her head that looked like a helmet. She remained there with her eyes closed, concentrating very hard.

“Whatever she imagines appears on the screen. It’s a ‘movie theatre’ that doesn’t need either cameras or projectors,” Ami explained.

“But that’s just too wonderful!” I exclaimed.

“Technology,” said Ami. “Simple technology.”

The woman finished her presentation and a man took her place while the audience applauded. Another kind of music began to play. On the screen some stylised birds appeared, which flew to the beat of the melody, over places made of crystal and of gigantic precious stones. It looked rather like an animated film and was very beautiful.

We remained silently contemplating that extraterrestrial wonder for a long time.

Next came a boy who presented the story of love between him and a girl from another world. It took place on diverse, strange planets. The images, less clear than those in the previous shows, sometimes vanished completely. I asked what was causing that.

“He’s a child. He doesn’t have an adult’s power of concentration yet, but he does it very well for his age.”

“Are they also imagining the music?”

“Not both images and music at the same time, at least not in this world. But there are other worlds where people can achieve such feats. However, in Ophir there are concert halls where the artist simply imagines the music and the audience listens to it.”

“Awesome!”

Would you like to go to an amusement park?” Ami asked.

“Of course!”

We arrived in a fantasy world with every sort of entertainment: gigantic roller coasters and places where people could levitate and do pirouettes in the air while nearly dying of laughter. Other attractions were imitations of fabulous places and fantastic creatures.

“The greater the evolution, the more one is like a child,” Ami explained to me. “In these worlds we have many places such as this. An advanced soul is like the soul of a child. We need play, fantasy and creativity.

“Does God play, Ami?”

“Peter, on another trip I’ll show you how the galaxies move in the cosmos. It’s a beautiful dance, the Universe at play, and where Love is the creator of all.”

“I was talking about God, Ami, not love.”

“Love is God. In our language we have a single word to refer to all those words you use - the Creator, the Divinity, God. This word is ‘Love’ and we write it with a capital letter. You people will do the same some day.”

“I’m realising more and more how important love is.”

“And you still don’t know very much! Let’s go. We’ve finished our visit to Ophir, now that you’ve seen how you people of Earth could start living tomorrow if you really desired to evolve as human beings. As I said before, we’re always around to teach you the rest.”

“Where are we going now?”

“To a world that is essentially beyond the reach of you and me, so that we can only visit it briefly with the help of a noble intention. It will take us a few minutes to get situated in that place. I’m going to use that time to tell you some more things.”

Ami adjusted the controls. The spaceship vibrated and on the other side of the windows appeared the mist that indicated we were going towards a distant world.

Chapter 13

A Blue Princess

“You said that there are people you find difficult to love, right, Peter?”

“Yes.”

“Is it bad not to love?”

“Of course,” I replied.

“Why?”

“Because you said yourself that love is the basis of the fundamental law, and all that.”

“Forget what I told you. Let’s suppose that I’m fooling you, or that I’m mistaken. Imagine a Universe without love.”

I began to imagine worlds where no one loved anyone. Everyone was cold and egocentric because without love, there’s no brake on the ego, as Ami had pointed out. Everyone competed with everyone else and they all ended up destroying each other. I remembered the energy that he had mentioned, energy that was capable of producing a cosmic catastrophe. I imagined a guy who was very powerful but a heartless fanatic, or who had a hurt ego that was out of control to the point that his own destruction didn’t matter to him. I imagined him pushing ‘the button’ just for vengeance... Galaxies were exploding in a chain reaction!

“If there were no love, I believe the Universe wouldn’t exist any more,” I deduced.

“Then could we say that love builds and absence of love destroys?”

“I think so.”

“Who do you say created the Universe?”

“God,” I answered Ami.

“Now, to use your way of talking about God for a minute, if love builds and God ‘built’ the Universe, is there love in God?”

“Of course!” There appeared to me the image of a shining, marvellous being who created galaxies, worlds, stars.

“Try leaving off the beard,” Ami laughed.

It was true! Once again I had imagined God with a beard and a human face, except that God was now in the centre of the Universe instead of up in the sky.

“Then you could say that God has a good deal of love.”

“Of course,” I said.

“Well, then, what did God create the Universe for?”

I thought for a long time and couldn’t find an answer. I protested, “Don’t you think I’m a bit young for that question?”

Ami paid no attention. “Why are you going to take those ‘walnuts’ home to your grandmother?”

“So that when she tastes them, she’ll be happy.”

“Why do you want her to be happy?”

“I kept thinking for a while, until I saw the answer.”

“Because... Because I love her!”

I had surprised myself by discovering another of the characteristics of love, which is, wanting the happiness of those we love.

“Then, why did God create people, worlds, landscapes, flavours, colours, aromas?”

“So that we’ll be happy!” I exclaimed, pleased that I had understood something that I’d been missing.

“Very good. Then, why does God want us to be happy?”

“Because God loves us!” I exclaimed again.

“Perfect. Is there anything superior to love?”

“You said that it was the most important thing.”

“And I also said for you to forget everything I said,” Ami chuckled. “Some people say that intellect is superior to love. What are you going to do when you give these ‘walnuts’ to your grandmother?”

“I’m going to find a way to prepare a surprise for her with them.”

“And you’re going to use your intellect for that, aren’t you?”

“Of course. I’m going to think about how I can best do it.”

“Then your intellect serves your love. Or is it the other way around?”

“I don’t understand,” I said.

“What is the origin of your desire for your grandmother to be happy? Is it your love or your intellect?”

“Oh! It’s my love. Everything is born from that.”

“Let’s see, then. First you love, and after that you use your intellect to make your grandmother happy. Is that true?”

“You’re right. I put my intellect to the service of love. Love is first.”

“What is above love, then?”

“Nothing?” I asked.

“Nothing,” Ami replied. He turned toward me with a luminous look in his eyes. “So if we say that God has much love, then what is God?”

“I don’t know.”

“If there’s something greater than love, God should be that, right?”

“Yes, I suppose so,” I replied.

“But what did we say that there was above love?”

“We said that there wasn’t anything.”

“So then, what is God?” Ami asked again.

“Oh! ‘God is love.’ You’ve said that several times, and the Bible also mentions it too. But I thought that God was a kind of person with infinite love.”

“No, God is not any kind of person with however much love. God is Love itself; Love is God. In other words, Love = God.”

“Ami, I don’t think I understand.”

“I told you that love is a force, a vibration, an energy whose effects can be measured with the instruments like the ‘senso-meter’ for example.”

“Yes, I remember that.”

“Just like light is also an energy or vibration.”

“Is it?”

“It is indeed, and X-rays, and infra-red and ultraviolet rays, and also thoughts too. They’re all vibrations of the same ‘thing’ at different frequencies. The higher the frequency, the finer the material or the energy. A rock and a thought are the same ‘thing’ but vibrating at very different frequencies.”

“What is this ‘thing’ you keep talking about?” I asked

“Love.”

“Really?”

“Really! Everything is love, Peter”

“Then God created the Universe only with love?”

“God ‘created’ is how you picture it. The truth is that this love energy took physical form, as the Universe, and everything in it, stars, clouds, planets, you and me.”

“Then... am I God?”

Ami smiled kindly and said, “A drop of sea water cannot say that it’s the sea, even though it’s composed of the same substance. And yes, you are made of the same stuff - you are Love, but vibrating at a frequency that’s not so high. Evolution consists in raising the frequency of the vibration.”

“Raising the frequency?”

“Hate is a very low vibration. Love is the highest vibration... Point to yourself.”

“I don’t understand what you mean, Ami.”

“When you say, ‘me,’ where do you point? At what part of your body? Point to yourself saying, ‘me.’”

I pointed with my finger at the centre of my chest, saying “me.”

“Why didn’t you point to the tip of your nose? Or your forehead? Or your throat?”

I thought it was odd to imagine myself pointing to any place other than my chest, while saying ‘me’.

“I don’t really know why I pointed to myself here,” I said, laughing.

“Because that’s where you really are. You are Love and you have your dwelling place in your heart. Your head is a kind of ‘periscope’, like a submarine’s. You can view the exterior with it - it’s your periscope with a computer inside it, your brain. You use it to understand the things of the world and to organise your body’s functions. Your limbs take you from one place to another and manipulate objects, but you are in here.”

Ami touched a point at the centre of my chest. “You are Love. So you see, whatever you do that goes against love is an act against yourself and the whole Universe. That’s why the fundamental law of the Universe is love. And that’s why love is tops in the Universe and why the real name of God is Love. Spirituality means experiencing and offering love, that is, elevated thoughts, emotions and actions”

“That makes everything much clearer to me, Ami. Thanks.”

The cabin was now being lit by a rosy light.

“We’ve arrived,

Peter.

Look out of the win...”

The interior of the spaceship was bathed in the soft colour of that rosy sky, almost a light lilac. My brain had stopped working in the usual way, but it’s hard for me to explain how my consciousness was changing. I began to feel that I wasn’t really myself, that I wasn’t the “me” that I am now. I stopped considering myself a boy from earth. Suddenly I had become something much more than that. It seemed as though I had been dreaming all my life that I was a boy called Peter, and had now suddenly recovered the memory of my true identity.

I felt that somehow I had known all this before, and that I was back in a familiar world.

Ami and the spaceship had disappeared. I was alone, and something told me I was returning here for a meeting that had been arranged long ago.

I did not need to walk; I just advanced, floating down from the rosy, shining clouds. There was no sun; everything was softly toned. An idyllic landscape appeared. Some birds that looked like swans glided across a pink lake. Maybe they were white but that lilac sky tinted everything. Around the lake were grasses and reeds in different shades of green, orange and rosy yellow.

In the distance, I could see rolling hills covered with foliage and flowers that looked like small, brilliant gems in a multitude of colours and tones. Various shades of pink and lilac also tinted the clouds.

I couldn’t say any longer whether I was inside that landscape or if the landscape was inside me! Or maybe that somehow we formed a single whole. But what surprises me most of all when I think about it today is that the foliage... sang! The grasses and flowers rocked back and forth while sounding musical notes to the rhythm of their movements. Others rocked in a different direction, emitting other distinctive notes. The whole of the plant kingdom was conscious!

Reeds, grasses and flowers sang while they rocked back and forth around me, and in the nearby hills; together, they produced the most marvellous concert that I’ve ever heard - the concert of life in an advanced world.

Floating along, I came to the bank of the lake. A pair of swans with several young behind them looked at me politely and respectfully from behind their blue masks. They greeted me by elegantly dipping their long necks. I returned the greeting with an affectionate, very slight bow, sending them much love from my heart. The parents told the young swans to greet me as well, although I couldn’t say exactly how this was done. The young obeyed, also bending their necks, although they didn’t do it as elegantly as their parents had done. For a moment they lost their balance, but then they regained it, shook their little tails nervously and continued swimming across the lake with a childish pride that made me feel tender towards them.

I continued moving forward, floating towards the meeting place. I had had a date for all eternity: I knew I was going to meet “her”.

In the distance appeared a sort of pagoda or pergola, floating near the bank of the lake. It had a Japanese-style roof, fastened with thin reeds. Intertwining rosy leaves and blue flowers climbed up the reeds and formed the walls of the pergola. On the polished wooden floor, there were cushions with wide, coloured fringes. Small adornments, like bronze or gold incense burners, and cages for some coloured insects that looked like crickets, hung from the ceiling.

“She” was there, seated serenely upon the cushions. I felt her nearness to me, so very near. Nevertheless, it would be the first time that we were going to meet after many, many lives.

We did not look each other in the eyes. We wanted to prolong the next few moments. There was no need to hurry. We had been already been waiting for so long... I bowed and she responded subtly, with a slight movement of her head. We began communicating but not with words. Words would have been too clumsy and out of harmony with those surroundings, with this meeting that I so desired. We did not gaze at each other directly yet. Our language was an artistic ritual of slight, barely visible movements of arms, hands and fingers, accompanied by a feeling state that we were projecting by means of vibrations.

Later Ami explained to me that when spoken language is insufficient to express what we feel, we need other forms of communication. Then we resort to Art!

The moment had arrived to look at that unknown face. She was a beautiful woman with Asian features and light blue skin, her silky black hair parted in the middle. She had a mole in the centre of her broad forehead.

I felt immense love for her, as she did for me.

The great moment had arrived. I reached my hands out to her and... and everything disappeared!

I found myself back in the spaceship next to Ami.

The shining, white mist indicated that we were leaving that world.

“...dow”.

Oh, now you’re back,” said Ami.

I discovered that the whole thing had occurred in a fraction of a second, between the “win” and the “dow” of the word “window” that Ami had just been speaking when the rosy light shone in through the glass.

I felt in torment, like someone woken from a beautiful dream to find himself in dismal reality.

Or was it just the opposite? Could this be a bad dream and the other one the reality?

“I want to go back!” I shouted.

Ami had cruelly separated me from ‘her’, ripping me away. How could he do that to me?

I still hadn’t regained my normal mind - the other “me” was still present. On one side I was Peter, the twelve-year-old boy, but on the other side I was a different being... Why couldn’t I remember what it was any longer?

“The time will come.” Ami gently calmed me. “You’re going to return, but not yet.”

I relaxed. I knew it was true, that I would return. I remembered that sensation of ‘not rushing things’ and felt more tranquil.

Little by little, I returned to normal, but I would never be the same again. I was Peter, but I knew I would only be Peter for a while. On the other side I was much more than someone called Peter. I had just discovered a dimension to myself beyond everything I had considered my normal identity.

“What world was I in?” I asked Ami.

“In a world beyond time and space, in another dimension.”

“I was there but I wasn’t the same, I was ‘another’...”

“You saw your future, what you will be when you complete your evolution to a certain level, two thousand measures, more or less.”

“When will that be?”

“There is still time for more growing to be done. So be patient.”

“How is possible to see the future?”

“Everything is happening simultaneously, once we go outside of time. The ‘story’ of your life is progressing in many different spaces and times. You just skipped ahead some pages and read some lines, that’s all. It was necessary - a little push so that you’ll definitely know it’s not true that when you stop breathing everything ends. And so that you’ll write about it and others will discover it too.”

“Who was that woman? I feel that we love each other, even now.”

“Each soul seeks completion with its other ‘half’, its soul mate.”

“She had blue skin!”

“So did you, in that other identity of yours. Only you didn’t look in a mirror.” Ami was laughing at me again.

“Is my skin blue now?” I looked at my hands uneasily.

“Of course not. Neither is hers now.”

“Where is she right now?”

“Thereabouts... thereabouts,” Ami said mischievously, with a mysterious air.

“Take me to her! I want to see her!”

“And how are you going to recognise her?”

“She has an Oriental face... even though I don’t remember her features. She has a mole on her forehead.”

“I’m telling you that she doesn’t look like that now, just as you don’t look like you did in that vision,” laughed Ami. Right now she’s an ordinary, average girl.”

“Do you know her? Do you know who she is?”

“Maybe... but don’t be in a hurry, Peter. Remember that patience is the science of peace, of interior peace. You don’t want to open a surprise present before it’s time. Love will be guiding you.”

“How will I recognise her?”

“Not with your mind, and not with preconceived ideas or fantasies. Only through your heart working in perfect harmony with your intellect - in other words, with wisdom.”

“But how?”

“Always observe yourself, especially when you meet someone who interests you, but don’t fall for appearances; seek what lies within. Don’t confuse desire or fantasy with what you really feel in your heart. Now, we don’t have much time left. Your grandmother is going to wake up. We must go back.”

“When will you return?”

“Write the book. Then I’ll return.”

“Should I put the ‘Oriental girl’ in it?”

“Put in everything. But don’t forget to say that it’s a story.”

Chapter 14

Until We Meet Again, Ami!

The blue atmosphere of my planet appeared.

We were above the sea, approaching the coastline. The sun was beginning to show above the horizon and it extended its golden rays between silvery clouds. The blue sky, the shining sea and mountains in the distance!

“My planet is great, in spite of everything.”

“I told you so” said Ami. It’s splendid and yet you people don’t pay attention to it. Not only don’t you pay attention, you’re destroying it and yourselves as well. But once you folks understand that love is the most important thing in life and start thinking and acting with solidarity, you’ll turn out all right. You need to think of all human beings, all ethnic groups the world over, as being one human family, and then you should live just as good families do, where everyone shares in the work and in the rewards, where everyone is protected, loved and sheltered.”

“And you told me that this must not be done through force, right?”

“Absolutely. It must happen spontaneously, as a result of the increasing level of solidarity and wisdom on Earth, together with understanding of how lack of love creates so many problems”. Fortunately, love is on the increase in this world of yours. So you can be optimistic.”

“I’m getting sleepy again.”

“Come here and I’ll give you an extra ‘charge’. But tonight you have to sleep.”

I lay down on the reclining chair, Ami put the charger on the back of my head and I slept.

I woke up full of energy and happy to be alive.

“Why don’t you stay with me for a few days more, Ami? We could go to the beach, visit other worlds...”

“I’d like to do that but I have a lot of things to do. Many beings ignore the importance of love and as a result are having major disasters in their worlds. It’s not only here on Earth.”

“Ami, you really help a lot!”

“It’s all down to Love. You can help to spread wisdom too. Work for peace and friendship. Improve yourself, and say ‘no’ to violence in your life, for ever.”

“I’ll do that... even though there are some people who deserve a good sock on the nose.”

Ami laughed. “You’re right, but they’re socking themselves on the nose. Remember the boomerang!”

The little coastal town appeared. When we had arrived, Ami stopped the spaceship a few yards over the beach. We had stayed invisible.

Ami accompanied me to the exit, behind the command cabin.

We hugged. I was really sad and so was he!

The yellow lights went on and dazzled me.

“Remember that love is the road to happiness,” he said, while I floated down onto the beach. Nothing could be seen overhead because the ship was in invisible mode, but I knew that Ami was watching me. Maybe, like me, he had tears on his cheeks.

I didn’t want to leave yet. With a branch I drew a winged heart on the sand on the beach, so that he would know that I had listened to his message. Immediately afterwards, I could feel something drawing a circle around my heart.

I heard Ami’s voice close by my ear. “That is the Earth.”

I walked away, towards my house. Everything looked pretty to me. I breathed in the aroma of the sea, caressed the sand, the trees and the flowers. If it hadn’t been for Ami, I probably would never have noticed how beautiful the path was. Even the rocks seemed to be vibrating with life.

Before going inside, I looked towards the sky over the beach. Nothing there. I felt a heaviness in my chest but cheered up with the thought that soon I would see my grandmother.

When I went indoors, there she was, still sleeping. I arranged everything in my bedroom to look as if I was just getting up and went to take a shower. When I came out of the bathroom, my grandmother was already out of bed.

“How did you sleep, sweetheart?”

“Very well, Grandma. How about you?”

“Terrible, Peter. As usual, I didn’t sleep a wink all night...”

I couldn’t keep from throwing my arms around her.

“Grandma, I have a surprise for you. I’ll give it to you during breakfast.”

The meal was prepared and served. I had placed the ‘walnuts’ on a plate covered by one of the elegant napkins that we put out when visitors come. Five or six pieces of fruit were left.

“Try this, Grandma,” I said, offering her the plate.

“What are they, sweetheart?” she asked, seeing their strange appearance.

“They’re extraterrestrial walnuts. Try them. They’re good.”

“The things you say, child. Let’s see. Mmm... How delicious! What is it?”

“I already told you. Extraterrestrial walnuts. Don’t eat more than three. They have too much protein.”

She didn’t pay attention to what I said and ate them all!

“Grandma, do you know what the fundamental law of the Universe is?”

I was happy, for now I was going to be able to teach her a wonderful lesson.

“Of course, child,” she said.

I got ready to correct her answer. “What is it?”

“Love, of course, Peter,” she responded at once.

I was staggered - I had never expected that. “But how did you know?” I exclaimed in disbelief.

“I don’t know... It’s what I feel in my heart, that love is the main thing, the source of the life, the meaning of everything, something like that.”

“Then many other people must know it, too,” I said, a little disappointed because I had just discovered that ‘the great news’ Ami had taught me was not such a novelty after all.

“I suppose they do, Peter.”

“Then, why is there evil and war in the world, Grandma?”

“Because those who know about love are fewer than those who don’t know, honey. But it won’t always be like that.”

I went off into town. When I reached the town square, I froze. Coming towards me were the two policemen from the night before! They passed right by me, ignoring me.

Suddenly they looked up. Other people were doing the same. There, high in the sky, a shiny object rocked back and forth, its lights changing colour - red, blue, yellow, green. The policemen were using their portable radios to contact the police station.

I was delighted and amused. I knew that Ami was watching me on the screen and I waved happily to him.

An older man with a cane arrived, looking very upset about all the noise.

“A UFO! A UFO!” cried the kids happily.

The man with the cane looked up, then down again in annoyance.

“Ignorant, superstitious people! That’s a weather balloon, a helicopter, a plane or something. UFOs! How stupid people are!” And with his cane he haughtily walked on down the street, turning his back on the amazing spectacle that had just appeared in the sky.

In my ear, I heard the voice of Ami saying “Good-bye, Peter. Until we meet again.”

“Good-bye, Ami,” I replied, filled with emotion, and the UFO was gone.

The next day’s newspapers didn’t even mention the UFO sighting. Maybe it’s because these so-called 'collective hallucinations' aren’t enough of a novelty to be news anymore!

~ ~ ~ ~

There is a seaside town, where waves break along the beach and steep rocks rise up behind. And on that seashore, a winged heart suddenly appeared, engraved on a high rock. No one knows how it was made. It looks almost as if the rock was melted in making that sign.

Anyone who goes there can see it, and, maybe with luck, might even see a light descending in the night sky and...

But it’s not that easy to climb there, especially for gentlemen with canes. A boy is more agile and, above all, much lighter.

The End